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# NINETEENTH-CENTURY STUDIES

COLLECTED AND EDITED BY  
HERBERT DAVIS  
WILLIAM C. DEVANE  
R. C. BALD



*NORWOOD EDITIONS / 1976*



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**Dedicated**

BY HIS COLLEAGUES

WITH AFFECTION AND RESPECT TO

CLARK SUTHERLAND NORTHUP

PH. D., LITT. D.

ON HIS RETIREMENT

AFTER FIFTY YEARS AT CORNELL

AS

UNDERGRADUATE

TEACHER

SCHOLAR .





## -Preface

THIS book was originally planned in the intention that it should be described as a collection of studies "by members of the Department of English at Cornell University," but during the period of less than two years between the projection and execution of the plan two of the editors have moved to important posts elsewhere and one of the contributors has joined another faculty. Though the title-page first envisaged has had to be abandoned, the book nevertheless reflects the interests and activities of a group of teachers who for a time worked together on the Cornell campus.

By the time the book was ready for the press it had become known that the Department was shortly to suffer another loss through the retirement of one of its most respected senior members. The period of literary history covered by these studies was also one with the teaching of which he had for long been identified, and it was felt that the gratitude of the University and of the Department for a lifetime of devoted scholarship could not be more fittingly acknowledged than by dedicating these pages to him.

From his entrance as a freshman in 1889 to his retirement in 1940, except for two years as teacher of classics in Cascadilla School, Professor Northup was connected with Cornell, and of these fifty-one years he was on the staff of the Department of English during forty-five. Few have had a longer, none a more honorable career as teacher, as investigator, as the ready helper and adviser of colleagues and students. His favorite studies in early English and in the nineteenth century have borne fruit in a long series of books and articles; the spirit of his scholarship, his ideals and breadth of view continue to be reflected in the work of students who have gone to positions of responsibility elsewhere. This influence does not end with his retirement. Into that retirement he carries the wishes of friends and associates for the serenity and the length of years which his labors and devotion have earned for him.



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## Coleridge and *The Ancient Mariner*: Addenda to *The Road to Xanadu*

By R. C. BALD

EVERY reader of *The Road to Xanadu* will remember how much Professor John Livingston Lowes's investigations into the creative processes behind *The Ancient Mariner* and *Kubla Khan* owe to one of Coleridge's notebooks—the now famous Gutch memorandum book in the British Museum. But Coleridge kept more than one notebook, and in all over fifty of them have survived.<sup>1</sup> Most of them are still in private possession, and it is unfortunate that they were inaccessible to Lowes when he was working on *The Road to Xanadu*. It is true that they contain very little that was not written after the composition of *The Ancient Mariner* and *Kubla Khan*, but, inevitably, they add considerably to our knowledge of Coleridge's mind and provide much information that is not available in the skilfully chosen pages of *Anima Poetae*. Fortunately, too, though never by any stretch of the imagination could they be called systematic, most of them are less abrupt and chaotic than the Gutch book, and the task of interpretation is far less exacting than that with which Lowes was faced.

The later notebooks supplement *The Road to Xanadu* in three ways. To begin with, they elucidate a number of passages in *The Ancient Mariner*, especially those which were altered or added after 1800. But they also illustrate the workings of Coleridge's mind sufficiently to suggest modifications of Lowes's conclusions in two important and apparently contradictory respects; it seems, on the one hand, that Coleridge's reading was deliberately planned to store up in his mind ma-

<sup>1</sup> *Anima Poetae* (London, 1895), pp. ix xiii. The notebooks are numbered, and references to them in this paper give the number of the notebook in roman numerals, followed by the page number when the pages have been numbered in the original.

The author gratefully acknowledges the kindness of the Right Hon. Lord Coleridge, who granted access to the manuscripts, of the Rev. G. H. B. Coleridge, who gave permission to print extracts from them, and of Miss K. H. Coburn, who generously helped to check the text of the extracts, and made a number of valuable suggestions.

terials that could be used in his poetry, and that the conscious element in the composition of *The Ancient Mariner* must therefore be stressed more than it has been; and, on the other hand, that the possible influence of opium in furnishing impressions which were incorporated into the poem must be reckoned with more seriously than Lowes has done. The range of mental activity which contributed to the poem was even wider and more complex than has previously been suggested.

## I

THE notebook now numbered 21 is handsomely bound in red morocco, and is inscribed in the donor's hand "from Joseph Cottle to his valued Friend S. T. Coleridge—Bristol Dec<sup>r</sup> <sup>th</sup>6. 1797." Coleridge used it on and off until 1805; he took it to Malta with him, and before he left Lamb inserted in it transcriptions of his *Hester* and Cowper's *Loss of the Royal George*. Only the first few pages of the book were used during the weeks that immediately followed the gift, and they throw a little, though only a very little, light on what was in Coleridge's mind during the period of the composition of *The Ancient Mariner*. There is one scrap of verse,

Twas not a mist, nor was it quite a cloud,  
But it pass'd smoothly on towards the Sea  
Smoothly & lightly betwixt Earth & Heaven,<sup>2</sup>

which records something that Coleridge had actually seen, and was afterwards transformed into

looking westward, I beheld  
A something in the sky.

At first it seem'd a little speck,  
And then it seem'd a mist:  
It moved and moved, and took at last  
A certain shape, I wist.

On the following page, too, there is an extract from one of South's sermons, followed by the single word "Dupuis," whose *Origine de tous les Cultes; ou Religion universelle*, in twelve octavo volumes, Coleridge had read in the previous year.<sup>3</sup> What was in Coleridge's mind when he

<sup>2</sup> XXI, 3. Printed as part of Fragment 16 by E. H. Coleridge in *The Poetical Works of S. T. C.*, p. 955. The lines, however, really consist of four separate fragments, of which this is the first.

<sup>3</sup> Lowes, pp. 231-233.

copied the passage from South into his notebook was made clear when he used it fifteen years later in *Omniana* in a note entitled "M. Dupuis."<sup>4</sup> Ordinarily one would not think of connecting it with *The Ancient Mariner*; Lowes, who quotes from the note in *Omniana* in a footnote,<sup>5</sup> did not do so. But when one knows that Coleridge read and transcribed South's words in December 1797, it is impossible to doubt that they coalesced with a number of other passages which are quoted in *The Road to Xanadu*,<sup>6</sup> and contributed something to the lines

Nor dim nor red, like God's own head,  
The glorious sun uprist.

South, preaching on the resurrection, had written

Christ, the great Sun of Righteousness and Saviour of the world, having by a glorious rising, after a red and bloody setting, proclaimed his deity to men and angels, and by a complete triumph over the two grand enemies of mankind, sin and death, set up the everlasting gospel in the room of all false religions, has now, as it were, changed the Persian superstition into the Christian devotion; and, without the least approach to the idolatry of the former, made it henceforth the duty of all nations, Jews and Gentiles, to worship the rising sun.<sup>7</sup>

Dupuis's purpose had been "to prove that Jesus Christ was the sun, and all Christians worshippers of Mithra,"<sup>8</sup> and Coleridge, finding the oddities of the infidel Frenchman supported by the fancy of the great English divine, doubtless felt that the simile "like God's own head" was more natural and appropriate than many of his readers have since felt.

In another notebook of later date (No. 16) there are a number of notes which are clearly passages transcribed from earlier notes, and among them one stands out:

<sup>4</sup> 1812 edition, i, 209, or Bohn edition, p. 354.

<sup>5</sup> P. 535.

<sup>6</sup> Pp. 155-157.

<sup>7</sup> Robert South, *Sermons preached on Several Occasions* (Oxford, 1842), iii, 160. In his notebook Coleridge gives a reference to Vol. V, Sermon 4, p. 165, but I have not identified the edition he used.

There is also a possible reminiscence of this passage from South in *The Destiny of Nations*, 23-26:

Infinite Love,  
Whose latence is the plenitude of All,  
Thou with retracted beams, and self-eclipse  
Veiling, revealest thine eternal Sun.

<sup>8</sup> *Omniana*, loc. cit.



Valley of Stones—and the three Ships in the Sun, the broad Sun / —Remember at Linton the Pilchard Merchant from Cornwall, who agreed that all the rest of the Catholic Religion would be abandoned / but they would never give up their Fast & Lent Days / nol never give up Cornish Pilchards!<sup>9</sup>

Can this (pilchard merchant and all) be a reminiscence of the walk with the Wordsworths to Linton and the Valley of Rocks on which *The Ancient Mariner* was planned and begun, and were the details which made surpassingly vivid the incorporation into the poem of the dream of the skeleton ship based on something which Coleridge had seen at the very time of the inception of the poem? It is just possible, but unfortunately the note is more likely to refer to another excursion to the same places made in May 1798 with Hazlitt and John Chester. Hazlitt, describing it nearly twenty-five years later, wrote:

The view in coming along had been splendid. We walked for miles and miles on dark brown heaths overlooking the Channel, with the Welsh hills beyond, and at times descended into little sheltered valleys close by the sea-side, with a smuggler's face scowling by us, and then had to ascend conical hills with a path winding up through a coppice to a barren top, like a monk's shaven crown, from one of which I pointed out to Coleridge's notice the bare masts of a vessel on the very edge of the horizon and within the red-orbed disk of the setting sun, like his own spectre-ship in the *Ancient Mariner*.<sup>1</sup>

Hazlitt's recollection does not absolutely tally with Coleridge's note,<sup>2</sup> but balances of probability seem to demand that, while further evidence is lacking, both accounts should be taken as referring to the same incident rather than that another so similar should have occurred before *The Ancient Mariner* was completed.

It is little enough, then, that the notebooks can tell about the composition of *The Ancient Mariner*, but the diary of Coleridge's voyage to Malta in 1804 has considerable interest in relation to the poem. It has been pointed out again and again that one of the miracles of *The Ancient Mariner* is that its author, when he wrote it, had never been to sea. Be-

<sup>9</sup> XVI, 16. The passage was transcribed in October 1803.

<sup>1</sup> *My First Acquaintance with Poets*. Later in the essay Hazlitt describes a conversation the next morning between Coleridge and "a fisherman," who may just possibly have been the Cornish pilchard merchant, on the beach at Linton.

<sup>2</sup> Hazlitt makes the incident occur on the way to Linton, before they could have reached the Valley of Rocks, and refers to one ship, not three.

When Coleridge wrote the note in Notebook XVI in October 1803 he may have added some details from memory, as he sometimes did in recopying earlier notes, but in any case his account is much closer to the date of the original incident than is Hazlitt's.

tween the first and second printings of the poem, it is true, he crossed the North Sea in travelling to and from Germany, but these comparatively brief experiences seem to have left no traces on the otherwise fairly extensive revisions made for the 1800 edition of *Lyrical Ballads*.<sup>3</sup> The voyage to Malta made a much deeper impression on his mind. On 9 April 1804 Coleridge left Portsmouth in the brig "Speedwell," which was one of a convoy for the Mediterranean; they reached Gibraltar in ten days and stayed there until the 25th, but they were then harassed by calms and head-winds, and did not reach Valetta until 18 May. The voyage was long and unnecessarily tedious, for the convoy had to proceed at the pace of the slowest, and Coleridge was miserably unwell during the latter part of it, but it had one interest for him: he was seeing for the first time things which he had visualized and even described, but which he had never actually seen before. One day, for instance, while the ship was at Gibraltar, he explored the Rock:

by mere accident / for I had passed it twice unnoticed / I blundered in upon S<sup>t</sup> Michael's Cave. It is the very model of that which I had described in my Tragedy / the most perfect that I ever beheld.—First descent forty striding Steps; about the 30<sup>th</sup> Step to your Left a massy Pillar, a Stalactite 20 feet in girth / a little beyond three Stalactites depending, two inosculated, one distant an intercolumnation of it's own size, each two feet perhaps in girth & hanging down 5 or 6 / in the first area there are at least 20 Pillars of Stalactite [*sic*] on the ground, some half way to the lofty roof, some not 4 feet above the ground / but the substance & surface of the Rock on my right!! the long grooves, & ribs—the crown upon crown, a tower of crowns! the models of Trees in stone, here a row of tall slender Pine Trees or whatever else are thin & tall, branching only at the top, or with branching Stems / here a full low bushy-branched Oak / all forms of ornament, with notches for Images not there / excepting that there were no Saints or Angels, it was perfect Gothic Extravaganza / —close by this the first Side Chamber, with a chasm & well & window precisely as I have described that in *Osorio* / <sup>4</sup>

The reference, of course, is to Act IV, scene i of *Osorio*, and the scene is famous because it originally opened with the lines

Drip! drip! drip! drip!—in such a place as this  
It has nothing else to do but drip! drip! drip!

—lines which called forth Sheridan's derisive parody, "Drip! drip! drip! there's nothing here but dripping!" The scene takes place in "a cavern,

<sup>3</sup> These have been described and analysed by B. R. McElderry jr. in "Coleridge's Revision of 'The Ancient Mariner,'" *S.P.*, xxix (1932), 68–94.

<sup>4</sup> XV, 26–27.

dark except where a gleam of moonlight is seen on one side of the further end of it from a crevice in a part of the cavern out of sight," and at the end of the scene Osorio treacherously murders Ferdinand by hurling him into a chasm in the recess at the rear of the cave.

If the scene from *Osorio* sprang into Coleridge's mind in the cave at Gibraltar, it was even more natural that, with the sights and sounds of the sea about him day after day, *The Ancient Mariner* should have been constantly recalled. When only two days out of Portsmouth he noted that he "Saw a nice black-faced bright-black-eyed white-toothed Boy running up to the Main top with a large Leg of Mutton swung, Albatross-fashion, about his neck,"<sup>5</sup> and when they were becalmed in the Mediterranean a "Hawk with ruffled feathers" alighted on the bowsprit. Before long it flew off in the direction of the other ships in the convoy, and soon the sound of shots was heard, provoking Coleridge to the reflection:

Poor Hawk! O strange Lust of Murder in Man!—It is not cruelty / it is mere non-feeling from non-thinking.—<sup>6</sup>

This is not quite the moral of *The Ancient Mariner*, but it is not far from it.

It would have been strange, too, if the man who had written

The water, like a witch's oils,  
Burnt blue and green and white,

had not been intensely alive to the colors of the sea. Coleridge's perception of delicate shades of color was almost as acute as an artist's, and the descriptions of scenery in the notebooks emphasise a gift for sensitive discrimination that has as yet scarcely been recognised. A note written on 3 May 1804 brings together a number of impressions of the colors of the sea which had been formed during the voyage:

During this heavy foggy flitting Eastern Wind the color of the Sea is the dark water-dusk of Lakes in drizzly overclouded weather / but rippling and breaking against the Sides of the Vessel into the very deepest brightest indigo Blue.—O what difference of Sea Colors!—From this now to the lightest delicate Starch Blue of sunny Calms—& the common Blue of the Sea how different from either.—Then the Shades of Blue into Green—the olive Greens & lastly (in my present Recollection only) the two bright Greens, one

<sup>5</sup> IX, 57.

<sup>6</sup> XV, 82.

as of cut Glass, the other Grass-green; tho' that is not so exact a Likeness as the cut Glass.—<sup>7</sup>

An earlier note, written during a calm after he had been leaning over the side of the ship, is still nearer in feeling to a famous group of stanzas in *The Ancient Mariner*:

Friday, April 27<sup>th</sup> / at one time a dead calm; the Ships, how *thin!* Profiles!— & for many hours nearly so—the Reflection of the Sun thro' the Sails & Ropes like a Vase or circular Plume of flames in tortuous flakes of bright sulphur-blue; cherubic swords of Fire—now blowing all one way, now dividing, now blossoming in a complete crater-vase, a lily-flower!—Rudder tied (Ropes rotted, yet still the Tiller moved not)—the ashes thrown over the Vessel's side remaining for Hours. Hints taken from real Facts by exaggeration—my Shadow, the Head in the center of the crater which now forms a Glory about my Head; <sup>8</sup> but my Shadow (a Shadow of me, from the waist upwards, of course) squares and masses itself into a mountain Shape / & when I stretch out my arm, it is like a dim flake of blue Cloud, a banner or streamer from the mountain-Cloud or cloud-like Mountain. / <sup>9</sup>

But, as he had written elsewhere, “renew the state of affection or bodily Feeling, same or similar—sometimes dimly similar / and instantly the trains of Forgotten Thought rise from their living catacombs,” <sup>1</sup> and on yet another occasion, when the circumstances of his experience approximated still more closely to those of his Ancient Mariner, significant words and phrases from the poem inevitably found their way into the description:

Image of moonlight at Gibraltar / The path from the Shore till within a good Stone throw of the Vessel thickly swarming with insect life, *all* busy—swarming in the path, their swarming makes—but within the Shadow of the Ship it was scattered at distances—scattered O's rapidly uncoiling into serpent spirals— O how slow a word is rapidly to express the Life & time-mocking Notion, of that Change, always O's before, always Spirals, coiling, uncoiling, *being*.—<sup>2</sup>

And at last, when the long and tedious voyage was over, when he had enjoyed a night of blissful sleep on dry land once more, he wrote in his

<sup>7</sup> XV, 56.

<sup>8</sup> A reminiscence of John Haygarth's “Description of a Glory,” in the *Memoirs of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Manchester*, Vol. III, of which Coleridge had made a memorandum in the Gutch book, ff. 73b-74a. See Lowes, pp. 29, 470-471.

<sup>9</sup> XV, 35-36.

<sup>1</sup> XXI, 102, and *Anima Poetae*, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> XV, 55. Cf. *The Ancient Mariner*, 272-281.

notebook, with a half-humorous recollection of the Ancient Mariner's joy when he awoke after the first lifting of the curse:

Satur. [May] 19<sup>th</sup> / —Found myself light as a blessed Ghost—brought my Things from the Boat / <sup>3</sup>

Indeed, it would have been strange if the words and images of *The Ancient Mariner*, consciously and unconsciously, had not flashed into Coleridge's mind during the voyage to Malta.

"Over what place does the Moon hang to your eye, my dearest Sara?" <sup>4</sup> Coleridge wrote on the night before he first set foot on German soil in 1798. To him, even during that comparatively brief crossing, came the feeling which all travellers know, that, however strange and unfamiliar their other surroundings, the sky and stars are still the same. As his ship voyaged southwards and into the Mediterranean in 1804 he watched the heavens as constantly as he had done at Keswick or Grasmere, <sup>5</sup> with an added nostalgia when he realised that those dearest to him could also see what he beheld in the sky. "O! dear Friends," he wrote on 12 May,

did you see the crescent with it's phantom moon, & the evening Star almost crowning it's upper Tip!—They descended together Southward, while far away to the East the Signal Light on the Commodore's Top-Mast was undistinguishable from the planet Mars—red, & sullen. But when the Moon & Evening Star approached the Horizon, both became of a dusky sullen red / that the Signal light shone bright by the comparison, such is the force of Comparison. The Moon set, till it's upper Tip became a star of exactly the same magnitude & appearance as the evening Star close above it / it set & in a few minutes it's companion followed / <sup>6</sup>

Three months later, at Malta, he recorded a similar occasion with similar feelings:

Monday Evening. July 9<sup>th</sup> 1804, about 8 o'clock, the glorious evening [star] coasted the moon, and at length absolutely crested it's upper Tip / true apparent Touch / Dr Sewell compared it to the figure of a Cock. [*diagram*]— It was the most singular & at the same time beautiful Sight, I ever beheld / O that it could have appeared the same in England / —at Grasmere. <sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *The Ancient Mariner*, 306–308.

<sup>4</sup> III, 1. Cf. "Satyrane's Letters," Letter I, *Biographia Literaria*, ed. J. Shawcross (Oxford, 1907), ii, 143.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Lowes*, pp. 171–179.

<sup>6</sup> XV, 78–79.

<sup>7</sup> XXI, 198.

To realise the completeness of the parallel between these descriptions and *The Ancient Mariner*, it should be recalled that the text (in the 1800 edition of *Lyrical Ballads*) then read

The horned Moon, with one bright star  
Almost between the tips,

and not, as we now know it, "Within the nether tip."

Not until 1817, when the poem was reprinted in *Sibylline Leaves*, did *The Ancient Mariner* receive its final form, and it is pertinent to ask whether any of Coleridge's experiences at sea eventually found their way into it. One would be justified in inferring that they had done so on finding the comparatively colorless stanza of 1798 and 1800,

But now the Northwind came more fierce,  
There came a Tempest strong!  
And Southward still for days and weeks  
Like Chaff we drove along;

replaced by ten magnificent lines:

And now the Storm-blast came, and he  
Was tyrannous and strong:<sup>8</sup>  
He struck with his o'ertaking wings,  
And chased us south along.

With sloping masts and dipping prow,  
As who pursued with yell and blow  
Still treads the shadow of his foe,  
And forward bends his head,  
The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast,  
And southward aye we fled.

The vividly concrete references to "sloping masts and dipping prow" and to the roar of the wind, together with the conception of pursuit by the storm, all have the authenticity of first-hand experience.<sup>9</sup> But

<sup>8</sup> This line was taken over from the fragment beginning

On stern Blencartha's perilous height

The winds are tyrannous and strong,

which, though first found in a notebook of 1806, was, according to E. H. Coleridge, almost certainly composed c. 1800. See also Lowes, second edition, p. 604k.

<sup>9</sup> The simile of the man pursued by a foe is to some extent a reworking of a passage in *Religious Musings*, 68-71:

God's altar grasping with an eager hand,  
Fear, the wild-visag'd, pale, eye-starting wretch,  
Sure-refug'd hears his hot pursuing fiends  
Yell at vain distance.

For experiences which may also have contributed to it, see below, pp. 33-34.

one alteration in the 1817 text (which, fortunately, was not permanent) is accompanied by a specific acknowledgement of the reasons for the change. Lines 103 and 104 there read

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,  
The furrow stream'd off free:

and a footnote explains that

In the former edition the line was,

The furrow follow'd free;

but I had not been long on board a ship, before I perceived that this was the image as seen by a spectator from the shore, or from another vessel. From the ship itself the *Wake* appears like a brook flowing off from the stern.<sup>1</sup>

In this case his impression was vivid enough for a notebook entry to be unnecessary, but there is one entry made during the voyage which concludes with a specific reference to *The Ancient Mariner*. During a calm in the Mediterranean he observed

Plenty of Bonitos leaping up / likewise Tortoises, with a noise of rushing, like that of a Vessel dashing on by steam or other power within itself, thro' the calm, & making the Billows & the Breeze, which it did not find / Ancient Mariner / —<sup>2</sup>

Here he was undoubtedly making a note of something which he thought might be incorporated into the poem, but as it was never used it is not certain whether it was intended to refer to the approach of the skeleton ship which, as

it neared and neared:  
As if it dodged a water-sprite,  
Plunged and tacked and veered,

or to the Ancient Mariner's mysterious and spirit-propelled homeward voyage.

The actual alterations in the text of *The Ancient Mariner* which first appeared in 1817 do not seem to have been begun on the voyage itself, although one important passage was written down soon after Coleridge's return from Malta. The first draft of what are now lines 199–207 is found in a notebook where there are earlier and later entries of various dates in October 1806, and it is transcribed here because neither Dykes Campbell (who first printed it) nor E. H. Coleridge has reproduced it exactly as it stands in the original:

<sup>1</sup> *Sibylline Leaves*, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> XV, 38–39.

With never a whisper in the main  
Off shot the spectre ship:  
And stifled words & groans of pain  
Mix'd on each murmuring lip,

And we look'd round & we look'd up,  
And Fear at our hearts as at a cup  
The Life-blood seem'd to sip  
The Sky was dull & dark the Night,  
The Helmsman's Face by his lamp gleam'd bright,  
From the sails the Dews did drip /  
Till clomb above the Eastern Bar  
The horned moon, with one bright Star  
Within its nether Tip.

One after one, by the star-dogg'd moon,  
 &c—<sup>2</sup>

It will be noted that the "star Within the nether tip" appears here for the first time,<sup>4</sup> and so too does the helmsman. Though Coleridge had never seen the star within the tip of the moon, he had at least seen a "true apparent Touch," and his interest in it suggests the attention with which he must have read the scientific accounts of such phenomena cited by Lowes.<sup>5</sup> The helmsman, however, he *had* seen, and a note made on the voyage to Malta when the ship was only three days out refers to the "Light of the Compass & rudderman's Lamp reflected with forms on the Main Sail,"<sup>6</sup>

In 1798 and 1800 the moon was "the horned Moon" in both line 210 and line 212, but in 1817 the reading of the manuscript fragment was adopted, and at line 212 it became "the star-dogged Moon." Furthermore, a copy of *Sibylline Leaves* has survived with Coleridge's manuscript note against the epithet, "It is a common superstition among sailors, 'that something evil is about to happen, whenever a star dogs the Moon.'"<sup>7</sup> We have already seen that, during the voyage, Coleridge

<sup>3</sup> XI, 8; "trembling" appears as a deleted alternative to "murmuring" in line 4, and "rose" for "clomb" in line 11.

<sup>4</sup> This, the most daring change Coleridge made in the text of the poem (even though, as Lowes points out, it had the scientific backing of the *Transactions of the Royal Society*), was made partly to intensify the sense in this part of the poem that the ordinary processes of nature are suspended, but partly also to remove the false rhyme ("drip" . . . "tips") of the earlier editions.

<sup>5</sup> Pp. 179-181.

<sup>6</sup> IX, 61.

<sup>7</sup> Lowes, p. 182.



was watching the moon with his usual intensity, and eagerly noted the fact when the crescent appeared with an attendant star. One morning at Gibraltar he lingered, with *The Ancient Mariner* not far from his thoughts, to talk of superstitions with the sailors; before going ashore he jotted down some notes of the conversation, and then added a fancy for a poem in which the phases of the moon were to play a leading part:

Edridge & his Warts cured by rubbing them with the hand of his Sister's dead Infant. / Knew a man who cured one on his Eye by rubbing it with a dead Hand of his Brother's— Comments on Ancient Mariner<sup>8</sup> / Our Capt<sup>n</sup> Damme . . . ! I have no superstition & had as soon sail on Friday as on Saturday; but this I must say, that Sunday is really a lucky day to sail on / indeed to begin any sort of business upon /

Poem / dim not feeble as a waning moon / the last curse of the waning moon / the bright moon that follow'd suspended it—but when the moon waned again, the Curse began to work, & was finished on the last day of the moon.<sup>9</sup>

Later, when the convoy was held up by unfavorable weather, comes another note, which is linked to the ones just quoted:

Tuesday Morning, May Day 1804!!—In the Mediterranean plying wearily to the Windward off Carthage—a wet foggy oppressive Weather, with the wind impotent or against us!—And the Capt<sup>n</sup> begins to look round for the Jonas in the Fleet. Mem. One advantage of sailing in a Convoy; in a single Vessel the Jonas must have been sought out amongst ourselves.

After a reminiscence of his voyage to Hamburg Coleridge refers to sailors' curses, and the way in which the Devil gets the blame whenever anything goes wrong. He continues:

Here Vexation, which in a Sailor's mind is always linked on to Reproach and Anger, makes the Superstitious seek out an Object of his Superstition, that can feel his anger— Else the Star, that dogged the Crescent, or my "Cursed by the last Look of the waning Moon," were the better—<sup>1</sup>

Then follows the outline of an essay on Superstition which, of course,

<sup>8</sup> The transition from the warts to *The Ancient Mariner* is not very clear. I can only conjecture that it was made by way of a discussion of the superstition of "the hand of glory," which, Lowes suggests (pp. 555-558), was the origin of five stanzas near the end of the poem, which were omitted after 1798.

<sup>9</sup> XV, 31-32.

<sup>1</sup> XV, 45-46.

was never written; all that remains of it is the single epithet in *The Ancient Mariner*, which must have been picked up from the talk of sailors at sea.

But the most important addition in 1817 was the gloss, which grew out of, and replaced, the argument originally prefixed to the poem.<sup>2</sup> In the main, the gloss is a fairly straightforward prose commentary, but in one passage which is its glory Coleridge's prose moves with a stately and rhythmical strength, achieving a beauty commensurate to that of the verses which it accompanies:

In his loneliness and fixedness he yearneth towards the journeying Moon, and the stars that still sojourn, yet still move onward; and every where the blue sky belongs to them, and is their appointed rest, and their native country and their own natural homes, which they enter unannounced, as lords that are certainly expected and yet there is a silent joy at their arrival.

Two at least of the images here were not new to Coleridge's mind. With the moon and stars, to whom "the blue sky belongs . . . and is their appointed rest" we may contrast some groups of trees which Coleridge had seen on his Scottish tour, and described in his notebook on 2 September 1803, soon after he parted company with the Wordsworths:

In my road from Tayndrum, of a large number of young Trees in the valley below me, by the Burn—but they seemed as if they had no Business there / no abiding place at least, as if they were met there, on a Moorland Fair-Day—<sup>3</sup>

There is the same instinctive but intensely imaginative personification in both passages, although the trees lack the very thing which the stars seem to possess, a triumphant fitness in their environment which makes them "lords" over it, and independent of it. The significance of the image in the word "lords" is further emphasised by another notebook passage. One night during the voyage to Malta (10 April 1804) Coleridge had been watching the ship cut through the waves, had seen the patches of foam dashed from the side of the vessel disappear into the darkness, and wrote:

The Ship at night moves like the crescent in a firmament of Clouds & Stars in them, the Clouds now all bright with a moonlike Light, now dim & watry-grey—now darting off—& often at such distance that they lose all ap-

<sup>2</sup> See *T.L.S.*, 26 July 1934, p. 528.

<sup>3</sup> VII.

parent connection with the Ship, & each seems it's own Lord, Spirits playing with each other / <sup>4</sup>

But even the combination of imaginative personification and rhythmical prose which is characteristic of the gloss is anticipated in the notebooks. There are two such passages written towards the end of Coleridge's stay in Malta, and in both of them, be it noted, the subject is the moon:

The *De crescent* still bright in heaven, very bright & with its shadow moon, but giving no light, for the Dawn gave it / the unseen Sun an hour before his personal appearance gave it, yet suffering the Benefactress of the Darkness to retain awhile her full Dignity.<sup>5</sup>

I awoke at 2 o'clock, Friday Morning, 12 July [1805], & then the full Moon was in all her Purity, bright, and the Stars were bold & mighty that could abide her Presence.<sup>6</sup>

Such notes as these show that the gloss was no *tour de force* in a manner previously untried.

One other passage in the gloss, "No twilight within the courts of the Sun," has something of the same imaginative quality as that which has just been considered, though it did not appear in the 1817 text. It was added later, and Lowes has traced its gradual evolution.<sup>7</sup> In two of the trial versions (added by Coleridge in manuscript to presentation copies of *Sibylline Leaves*) there are references to the evening gun: "As the Sun's last segment dips down, and the evening-gun is fired, the constellations appear arrayed," and "At the moment, the *second*, that the Sun sinks, the Stars appear all at once as if at the word of command announced by the evening Gun, in our W. India Islands." At Malta Coleridge had occupied an official position in a town under military occupation by British forces, and his rooms were close to the barracks. He had therefore heard the evening gun night after night, and in one of his notebooks there are references to it on two successive leaves:

Rings of Russet smoke from the evening Gun, at Valette.

<sup>4</sup> IX, 55-56. With this passage compare an earlier one written during the crossing to Hamburg in 1798:

The Ocean is a noble thing by night— / the foam that dashes against the vessel beautiful white clouds of Foam roaring & rushing by the side of the Vessel with multitudes of stars of flame that danced and sparkled & went out amidst it—light skirmishers— / (III, 2)

The note just quoted was used in "Satyrane's Letters" (*Biog. Lit.*, ii, 141) and furnished an image for the poem *To William Wordsworth*, 96-101.

<sup>5</sup> XVIII, 185-186.

<sup>6</sup> XVI, 138.

<sup>7</sup> Pp. 164-168.

The smoke shot up, rocket or fountain like before the report is heard—the little moment before.<sup>8</sup>

On the same day as that on which he wrote the first of these memoranda he also recorded:

I have been obliged (Friday Dec. 7. 1804) to read or look into Edwards' Hist. of W. Ind. for a foolish business—it deserves a better reading—

and then follows a comment on a passage in the book.<sup>9</sup> This in turn is immediately followed by the second of the two notes about the evening gun, and next comes an amusing anecdote about the West Indies,<sup>1</sup> perhaps derived, one may surmise, from an officer of the garrison who had previously served out there. Though the West Indies and the evening gun never appeared in the printed gloss of *The Ancient Mariner*, it needs no ingenuity to see how they had become indissolubly associated with one another in Coleridge's mind.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that into one notebook<sup>2</sup> Coleridge copied the passage from Thomas Burnet's *Archaeologiae Philosophicae*, which first appeared in *Sibylline Leaves* as the motto of *The Ancient Mariner*. There is nothing in the notebook to link it with the poem, and it was probably transcribed about the end of 1801, but it was ready to Coleridge's hand for use whenever he chose.

## II

Two brief but highly significant notebook entries furnish a starting point for a further enquiry. The first was written on 26 October 1803:

Sadly do I need to have my Imagination enriched with appropriate Images & Shapes. / Read Architecture, & Ichthyology;<sup>3</sup>

and the second, at least six years later, was probably written in December 1809:

To read most carefully for the purposes of Poetry Sir W. H.'s Account

<sup>8</sup> XXI, 211 and 213.

<sup>9</sup> In spite of the impression conveyed by Coleridge's note, he was already familiar with Bryan Edwards's *History, Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies*, to which he acknowledged indebtedness for the theme of *The Three Graves*. See Lowes, pp. 127, 493.

<sup>1</sup> Printed in *Anima Poetae*, p. 89.

<sup>2</sup> XXII, 13.

<sup>3</sup> XXI, 142.

of the Earthquakes &c in the New Annual Register, 1783—or Phil. Trans. 73<sup>rd</sup> Vol.<sup>4</sup>

Though later in date than the period of *The Ancient Mariner*, these notes, if they are to be regarded as throwing any light at all on Coleridge's methods and habits as a reader, immediately suggest that the reading chronicled in *The Road to Xanadu* was not the desultory reading of an all-curious mind, with no definite plan or purpose in view; they suggest that Purchas and Captain Cook and Bruce, even Priestley on *Optics*, and the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, were all "read most carefully for the purposes of Poetry." Lowes has shown how Coleridge's proposal for a series of Hymns to the Sun, Moon, and the Elements sharpened his eyes to certain details in his reading, but these details were incidental discoveries rather than the objects of his search. A more grandiose plan, which determined the direction of his reading, lay at the back of Coleridge's mind: he hoped to write an epic.

In a letter of 10 January 1797 Lamb wrote beseechingly: "Coleridge, I want you to write an Epic poem. Nothing short of it can satisfy the vast capacity of true poetic genius,"<sup>5</sup> and a few weeks later he returned to the same subject: "I have a dim recollection that, when in town, you were talking of the Origin of Evil as a most prolific subject for a long poem. Why not adopt it, Coleridge? there would be room for imagination."<sup>6</sup> This theme, then, was as old as the days when Coleridge and Lamb met nightly at the Salutation and Cat, and Lamb writes as if it might have been forgotten. But Coleridge had not forgotten it, for it was already enrolled in his notebook among the list of his projected "Works" as "The Origin of Evil, an Epic Poem."<sup>7</sup> Some time in 1797, however, the subject changed; one of his other projects drew his attention to a more appropriate theme. As Lowes has pointed out, in that year "Coleridge was getting ready to write his 'Cain' by reading Josephus."<sup>8</sup> From the *Antiquities* he must have passed on to read (or re-read) *The Wars of the Jews*, and while he was doing so his imagination was kindled. In his old age he told his nephew a little about his plan:

<sup>4</sup> XIV, 11–12. The reference is to "An Account of the Earthquakes which happened in Italy, from February to May 1783," by Sir William Hamilton, *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, lxxiii (1783), 169 ff.

<sup>5</sup> *Letters of Charles Lamb*, ed. E. V. Lucas (1935), i, 85.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, i, 95.

<sup>7</sup> Gutch memorandum book, f. 21a; Lowes, p. 20.

<sup>8</sup> Lowes, p. 237; cf. the Gutch book, ff. 79b and 80b.

The destruction of Jerusalem is the only subject now remaining for an epic poem; a subject which, like Milton's Fall of Man, should interest all Christendom, as the Homeric War of Troy interested all Greece. There would be difficulties, as there are in all subjects; and they must be mitigated and thrown into the shade, as Milton has done with the numerous difficulties in the *Paradise Lost*. But there would be a greater assemblage of grandeur and splendour than can now be found in any other theme. As for the old mythology, *incredulus odi*; and yet there must be a mythology, or a quasi-mythology, for an epic poem. Here there would be the completion of the prophecies—the termination of the first national revealed religion under the violent assault of Paganism, itself the immediate forerunner and condition of the spread of a revealed mundane religion; and then you would have the character of the Roman and the Jew, and the awfulness, the completeness, the justice. I schemed it at twenty-five; but, alas! *venturum expectat*.<sup>9</sup>

Though unrealised, this plan was not lightly abandoned. In a list of projected works, similar to that in the Gutch book but written in November 1803, the "Hymns, Sun, Moon, Elements, Man & God" are followed by "Destruction of Jerusalem" and "Conquest of India by Bacchus in Hexameters,"<sup>1</sup> and as late as 1816 Coleridge wrote to H. J. Rose that

Should it please the Almighty to restore me to an adequate state of health, and prolong my years enough, my aspirations are toward concentrating my powers in 3 works,

of which the third was "an epic poem on the destruction of Jerusalem under Titus."<sup>2</sup>

Though so many of Coleridge's projects seem to have been set down lightly from a mind teeming with projects, he cherished no illusions that it was easy to write an epic. Yet in 1796 and 1797 the same thought which prompted Lamb's exhortation—that nothing short of an epic could "satisfy the vast capacity of true poetic genius"—must often have been in his mind, and there are various indications that he was testing his powers. *Religious Musings* was his first independent experiment in Miltonic blank verse, and *The Destiny of Nations*, a revision of his contribution to Southey's *Joan of Arc*, which at line 133 he refers to as

<sup>9</sup> *Table Talk*, 28 May 1832, Bohn edition, p. 160. It is worth adding that *The Prelude*, I, 166–220 (written, apparently, about March 1798) shows that Wordsworth also was trying to find a subject for a heroic poem at about the same time.

<sup>1</sup> XXI, 164. The Destruction of Jerusalem and The Conquest of India appear in juxtaposition to one another as late as *Table Talk* for 4 September 1833 (pp. 261–262).

<sup>2</sup> *Unpublished Letters of S. T. C.*, ed. E. L. Griggs, ii, 190.

an "Epic song," was a still more ambitious exercise in the heroic manner. Ludicrously inflated as both poems seem to the modern reader, they reveal one direction in which Coleridge was trying to develop.

Nevertheless, Coleridge had no thought of commencing epic poet overnight; he knew his *Paradise Lost* too well for that. He was familiar, too, with the noble autobiographical passages in *The Reason of Church Government* in which Milton declared that his purpose could only be accomplished by "labour and intent study," and dedicated himself to

a work not to be raised from the heat of youth, or the vapours of wine, like that which flows at waste from the pen of some vulgar amouirist, or the trencher fury of some rhyming parasite; nor to be obtained by the invocation of dame Memory and her siren daughters, but by devout prayer to that eternal Spirit who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends out his seraphim with the hallowed fire of his altar to touch and purify the lips of whom he pleases: to this must be added industrious and select reading, steady observation, insight into all seemly and generous arts and affairs; till which in some measure be compassed, at mine own peril and cost, I refuse not to sustain this expectation.

These very words were in Coleridge's mind in the spring of 1797 when, in a letter to Cottle, his sense of Southey's limitations prompted him to make comparisons, somewhat to his friend's disadvantage, between Southey and Milton, and he passed on to remark:

Observe the march of Milton—his severe application, his laborious polish, his deep metaphysical researches, his prayers to God before he began his great poem, all that could lift and swell his intellect, became his daily food. I should not think of devoting less than 20 years to an Epic Poem. Ten to collect materials and warm my mind with universal science. I would be a tolerable Mathematician, I would thoroughly know Mechanics, Hydrostatics, Optics, and Astronomy, Botany, Metallurgy, Fossilism, Chemistry, Geology, Anatomy, Medicine,—then the *mind of man*—then the *minds of men*,—in all Travels, Voyages and Histories. So I would spend ten years—the next five to the composition of the poem—and the five last to the correction of it.<sup>8</sup>

It will be noticed that Coleridge makes no mention of poetry and philosophy in this compendium of learning that he proposed to master, for he absorbed them so easily that he could take them for granted. I cannot speak for Coleridge's knowledge of mathematics and mechanical sciences, but he had more nearly realised his ideal of preparedness than has been acknowledged. Anatomy and medicine had fascinated

<sup>8</sup> *Unpublished Letters*, i, 71.

him since, during his schooldays, he had accompanied his brother Luke on his rounds at the London Hospital and had read everything on the subject he could lay his hands on; he was able to write to Thelwall on 19 November 1796 "I am a so-so chemist, and I love chemistry,"<sup>4</sup> he attended Davy's lectures at the Royal Institution in 1802,<sup>5</sup> and proposed with Wordsworth and another friend to set up a small experimental laboratory among the Lakes;<sup>6</sup> on optics he had at least read Priestley;<sup>7</sup> and in one of the notebooks<sup>8</sup> there is a long alphabetical list of plants, to say nothing of a pedantic display of botanical terms in footnotes to *This Lime-Tree Bower my Prison*, *The Keepsake*, and *Melancholy*. For the student of *The Ancient Mariner*, of course, his declared interest in "the *mind of man*—then the *minds of men*—in all Travels, Voyages and Histories" is more important than all the other branches of knowledge. How wide it was it needed *The Road to Xanadu* to show, but it must not be forgotten that this reading was part of a consciously formed plan. It is true that there was probably no reading specifically "for the purposes of" *The Ancient Mariner*, but in finding the theme of the poem Coleridge found one for which, unawares, he had prepared himself as for nothing else he ever wrote. Though there was never any epic on the Origin of Evil or the Destruction of Jerusalem, they played their parts no less than the unwritten Hymns in contributing to the genesis of *The Ancient Mariner*.

At this point a proviso and a question suggest themselves. Neither was considered by Lowes, perhaps merely because he underestimated the stupidity of at least one reader; yet *The Road to Xanadu*, it is not unfair to say, leaves the impression that many, if not most, of the finest effects of *The Ancient Mariner*, in a large part at least, owe their being to the workings of the subconscious—to "the potency of the Well," as he calls it. He does not, of course, deny the element of conscious artistry in the poem—far from it; but he finds it most in the choice and ordering of the materials presented by the subconscious, and most of all in the structure and symmetry of the verses themselves.<sup>9</sup> But—and this is the proviso—though Coleridge may not have been aware of the extent to which Father Bourzes, Bartram, Sir Richard Hawkins, Dampier, and Captain Cook had all contributed subtly to the description of the water-

<sup>4</sup> *Letters of S. T. C.*, ed. E. H. Coleridge, i, 181.

<sup>5</sup> *Letters*, ii, 462-463.

<sup>6</sup> *Letters*, i, 345-348; cf. *Unpublished Letters*, i, 142, 144.

<sup>7</sup> Lowes, pp. 38-40.

<sup>8</sup> XXI, 23-32.

<sup>9</sup> Chapters 4 and 5.



snakes,<sup>1</sup> he *must* have been conscious that he was reproducing in the poem impressions which had been originally created in his mind by the narratives of the voyagers; he would have known, for instance, that he had derived his knowledge of the polar regions from such records as those of Martens and Harris and James, for that knowledge, of course, owed its existence in his memory to his reading of them, and not to his personal experience. The question that naturally follows is this: To what extent was Coleridge aware of his debt to his reading?

Such a question, no doubt, could only be answered in detail if it were possible to recall the Coleridge of 1798 from the shades and confront him with *The Road to Xanadu*.<sup>2</sup> An *a priori* answer on the lines suggested in the previous paragraph, however reasonable or probable it may seem, lacks the specific proof that clinches conviction. But, though finality can scarcely be reached, it is at least possible to emphasize several facts which bear on the problem.

As Professor Lane Cooper has pointed out,<sup>3</sup> insufficient attention has been paid to Wordsworth's note on *The Ancient Mariner* at the end of the first volume of the 1800 edition of *Lyrical Ballads*. There Wordsworth enumerated what he felt to be the defects of the poem, and the last of them is that "the imagery is somewhat too laboriously accumulated." This criticism has never been taken seriously because of the apparent ease and perfection of *The Ancient Mariner*, and the completeness with which the elements from which it was built up have been absorbed into the design; yet it certainly records that Wordsworth's impression was not one of an almost spontaneous welling up of imagery such as *The Road to Xanadu* suggests. It must not be forgotten that

<sup>1</sup> Lowes, pp 40-53

<sup>2</sup> Even then one might not be able to rely on his answers! One remembers how De Quincey read in Shelvocke the story of the shooting of the albatross "There at once I saw the germ of the 'Ancient Mariner,' and I put a question to Coleridge accordingly. Could it have been imagined that he would see cause utterly to disown so slight an obligation to Shelvocke? Wordsworth, a man of stern veracity, on hearing of this, professed his inability to understand Coleridge's meaning the fact being notorious, as he told me, that Coleridge had derived from the very passage I had cited the original hint for the action of the poem." (De Quincey *Works* ed Masson, II, 145) Lamb, however, judged Coleridge less harshly than Wordsworth on such occasions. On 8 February 1800 he wrote to Manning "I cannot but smile at Lloyd's beginning to find out, that Col can tell lies. He brings a serious charge against him—that he told Caldwell he had no engagements with the Newspapers! As long as Lloyd or I have known Col so long have we known him in the daily & hourly habit of quizzing the world by lies, most unaccountable & most disinterested fictions." (*Letters*, I, 172) It is only fair to Coleridge to add that in this particular instance Lloyd's charge had no foundation in fact, see *The Letters of Thomas Manning to Charles Lamb*, pp 32-33

<sup>3</sup> *Aristotelian Papers* (1939), p 201

Wordsworth had been a spectator, almost a partner, of the throes of its production from the afternoon of 13 November 1797, when the poem was planned and begun,<sup>4</sup> until the afternoon of 23 March 1798, when Coleridge "brought his ballad finished."<sup>5</sup> Wordsworth, too, shared in much of Coleridge's reading at this time, and it is clear from his criticism that he was aware of the sources of much of the imagery, as well as of the way in which it had been accumulated. Furthermore, Wordsworth himself levied contributions for his poetry on some of the very books to which Coleridge was indebted; he made open acknowledgment to Hearne's *Journey from Hudson's Bay to the Northern Ocean* in the note at the head of *The Complaint of a Forsaken Indian Woman*, and *Ruth*, as Lowes has emphasised,<sup>6</sup> is permeated with the influence of Bartram. Though the creative processes of the two poets may not have been identical, similar influences were at work, and similar aims were being kept in view. Even supposing Coleridge to have been unaware of the general nature of his indebtedness in *The Ancient Mariner* to the narratives of the old travellers, Wordsworth at any rate was aware of it.

Furthermore, the Gutch memorandum book shows that Coleridge was reading Bartram at the very time *The Ancient Mariner* was nearing completion. Sandwiched in between two extracts from Bartram is a note of the incident describing how Hartley stopped crying when he was shown the moon, which was afterwards versified in *The Nightingale*. Almost immediately after the last note from Bartram is the first draft of some lines describing the bird's song which were also used in *The Nightingale*.<sup>7</sup> *The Nightingale* was written in April 1798, just after *The Ancient Mariner* was completed; can we not say, then, that any influences of Bartram on *The Ancient Mariner* were a direct stimulus to Coleridge's poetic activity? Bartram's words may have been of power enough to bring up from the depths of "the Well" forgotten words, phrases, and images that linked themselves to his, but they can scarcely have had time to become deeply submerged in it themselves.

One other reflection suggests itself. It is impossible to read *The Road to Xanadu* without realising how much the interpretation of Coleridge's mental activities owes to Coleridge's own penetrating analyses of them.

<sup>4</sup> E. K. Chambers, *S. T. Coleridge: a Biographical Study*, p. 85.

<sup>5</sup> Dorothy Wordsworth, *Journals*, 1, 14.

<sup>6</sup> Pp. 9, 455.

<sup>7</sup> Ff. 31b-36b; cf. Lowes, pp. 8-11.

He really was, as Shelley called him, "a subtle-souled psychologist," and, in order to realise the extent of Lowes's debt to Coleridge himself, it is only necessary to imagine the task of interpretation in a similar study, starting as it were *in vacuo*, of such a poet as Poe, whose work presents a number of problems similar to those investigated in *The Road to Xanadu* but who deliberately obscured his creative processes.<sup>8</sup> Of Coleridge's place in the history of psychology I am not competent to write (nor has the subject yet been properly investigated), but it hardly needs a specialist's knowledge to be aware of the immense importance of David Hartley's doctrines, and especially his theory of association, in Coleridge's development. It laid such a hold on him that it probably determined the direction of his thought for the greater part of his life,<sup>9</sup> and his perception of its limitations was one of the great steps forward in his philosophical development. Chapters 5-7 of *Biographia Literaria* contain his fullest and most formal discussion of the subject, but, though he there records his disagreement with Hartley, he always regarded the principle of association as a fundamental law of the operation of the mind. The apex of Coleridge's faith in Hartley came about the time of the birth of his eldest son; shortly afterwards, in *Religious Musings*, he placed among the "mighty Dead" who had been "Coadjutors of God"

[him] of mortal kind  
 Wisest, [him] first who marked the ideal tribes  
 Up the fine fibres through the sentient brain,<sup>1</sup>

but he had emerged from blind adherence by the end of 1800. For most of the interim Hartley supplied him with the foundations of his psychology, perhaps even of his philosophy. Add to Coleridge's pas-

<sup>8</sup> In "The Philosophy of Composition, for instance

<sup>9</sup> An example of the way in which Hartley still influenced Coleridge even when he no longer upheld his doctrines may be cited. One of Coleridge's most interesting notes on the association of ideas begins "I will at least make the attempt to explain to myself the origin of moral evil from the streamy nature of association" (*Anima Poetae* p. 55). Why, one might ask with a certain surprise, make the attempt at all? Hartley's preface to his *Observations on Man* supplies the answer, in a passage explaining the origin of the work: "About eighteen years ago I was informed that the Rev. Mr. Gay, then living, asserted the possibility of deducing all our intellectual pleasures and pains from association. This put me upon considering the power of association. Mr. Gay published his sentiments on the matter, about the same time, in a dissertation on the Fundamental Principle of Virtue, prefixed to Mr. Archdeacon Law's translation of Archbishop King's *Origin of Evil*." Coleridge had certainly read these words, and one can hardly doubt that the poet who meditated a poem on the *Origin of Evil* had also read King's book and Gay's dissertation. For another example of the way in which Hartley probably exerted a continued influence on Coleridge's thought see below, pp. 40-41, n.

<sup>1</sup> Lines 368-370

sionate interest in the principle of association his almost unrivalled power of subtle and penetrating analysis, and it will be apparent that one so interested as he in the workings of his mind may well have become aware of some of the strange fusions of elements in *The Ancient Mariner*.

A passage from one of the notebooks will illustrate how Coleridge could analyse the workings of association. It seems to date from 1810, and its opening lines state his mature views with exceptional clarity, but it was doubtless omitted from *Anima Poetae* because the greater part of it is taken up with recollections of Sara Hutchinson:

I had been talking of the association of Ideas, and endeavoring to convince an Idolater of Hume & Hartley, that this was strictly speaking a law only of the memory & imagination, of the *Stuff out* of which we make our *conceptions* & perceptions, not of the thinking faculty, *by* which we make them—that it was as the force of gravitation to leaping to any given point—without gravitation this would be impossible, and yet equally impossible to leap except by a *power* counteracting first, and then using the *force* of gravitation.<sup>2</sup> That Will, strictly synonymous [*sic*] with the individualizing Principle, the “I” of every rational Being, was this governing and applying Power— And yet to shew him that I was neither ignorant [of], nor idle in observing, the vast extent and multifold activity of the *Associative Force* / I entered into a curious and tho fanciful yet strictly true and actual, exemplification. Many of my Instances recalled to my mind my little poem on *Lewti*, the Circassian / and as by this same force joined with the assent of the will most often, tho’ often too vainly because weakly opposed by it, I inevitably by some link or other return to you, or (say rather) bring some fuel of thought to the ceaseless yearning for you at my Inmost, which like a steady fire attracts constantly the air which constantly feeds it / I began strictly and as matter of fact to examine that subtle Vulcanian Spider-web Net of Steel—strong as Steel yet subtle as the Ether, in which my soul flutters inclosed with the Idea of your’s—to pass rapidly as in a catalogue thro’ the Images only, exclusive of the thousand Thoughts that possess the same force, which never fail instantly to awake into vividder flame the forever and ever Feeling of you— The fire / Mary, you, & I at Gallow-Hill / —or if flamy, reflected in children’s round faces—ah whose children?—a dog—that dog whose restless eyes oft catching the light of the fire used to watch your face, as you leaned with your head on your hand and arm, & your feet on the *fender* / the fender thence /— Fowls at Table—the last dinner at Gallow Hill, when you drest the two fowls in that delicious white Sauce which when very ill is the only idea of food that does not make me *sicker* / all natural Scenery—ten thousand links, and if it please me, the very spasm

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Biog. Lit.*, i, 85, where the same image is used in the same connection.

& drawing-back of a pleasure which is half-pain you not being there—  
 Cheese, at Middleham, too salt / horses, my ride to Scarborough—asses, to  
 that large living 2 or 3 miles from Middleham / All Books—my study at  
 Keswick / —the Ceiling or Head of a Bed—the green watered Mazarine!—  
 A Candle in its socket, with its alternate fits & dying flashes of lingering  
 Light— . . . Books of abstruse Knowledge—the Thomas Aquinas & Suarez  
 from the Durham Library / <sup>3</sup>

The passage goes on further in the same manner, and it is incomplete because after Coleridge's death the leaf on which it ended was torn out, yet there is more than enough to show how he could trace and follow up the thronging associations in his mind. Still more interesting is the fact that, by way of example, he should have called up for analysis a train of associations, and then have realised that they were the same ones he had already used when composing *Lewti*. In view of such a passage, can one doubt that Coleridge, though he may never have done so, was capable of tracing back to their origins the impressions which combined from complex sources into parts of *The Ancient Mariner*? And is it not likely that in the very act of creation he could feel, though but dimly, the complexity of the elements which even then were in the act of fusing in his mind?

### III

ANOTHER psychological factor in the creation of *The Ancient Mariner* has been suggested: opium. Lowes devotes a vigorous chapter <sup>4</sup> to the rebuttal of the late J. M. Robertson's categorical statement that *The Ancient Mariner* and the first part of *Christabel*, together with *Kubla Khan*, were "all conceived and composed under the first stages of the indulgence," and therefore represented "an abnormal product of an abnormal nature under abnormal conditions." <sup>5</sup> Refutation was easy because Robertson, instead of hazarding a cautious statement in the form "Some A is B," had thrown caution to the winds and proclaimed "All A is B." By doing so he placed himself in what, in controversy, is the weakest of all positions, and Lowes took full advantage of his opponent's recklessness. Since then, however, the whole question has been reopened in the interesting and provocative essay by Meyer H. Abrams entitled *The Milk of Paradise*. <sup>6</sup> In it he not only availed himself of Lowes's safeguarding clause that there was a "possibility that this or

<sup>3</sup> XVIII, 18–24.

<sup>4</sup> Chapter XXI.

<sup>5</sup> *New Essays towards a Critical Method* (1897), pp. 138, 187.

<sup>6</sup> Harvard University Press, 1934.

that image may previously have flashed before Coleridge's inner eye at some time when the enchantment of the drug was on him,"<sup>7</sup> but went further and concluded that in *The Ancient Mariner* "a framework of plot was constructed expressly to contain the pre-existent dream phenomena."<sup>8</sup>

It will be well, before accepting any of these conclusions, to restate briefly the main facts about Coleridge's opium-taking, since their interpretation is thus once more in dispute. No radically new conclusions are offered, but there are several previously unnoticed pieces of evidence; and, while no account of the matter can completely reconcile all Coleridge's own statements, it is worth while attempting to explain as many of them as possible, if only in footnotes.

Late in life Coleridge attributed the beginning of his opium *habit* to the illness which afflicted him during the last two months of 1800 and the early part of 1801. He gave this account on various occasions, and it is repeated here from a previously unpublished notebook version:

For some months, after my return from Germany & my establishment at Greta Hall, Keswick, I had been all but bed-ridden, when . . . I borrowed a load of old Medical Journals from my Medical Attendant Mr Edmondson; I found a case precisely like my own—in which a marvellous cure had been effected by rubbing in laudanum, at the same time that a dose was administered inwardly— / I tried it— It answered like a charm / in a day I was alive—all alive!—Wretched delusion!—but I owe it in Justice to myself to declare before God, that this, the curse and slavery of my life, did not commence in any low craving for sensation, in any desire or wish to stimulate or exhilarate myself—in fact, my nervous spirits and my mental activity were such as never required it—but wholly in rashness, and delusion, and presumptuous Quackery and afterwards in pure terror—not lured but goaded!—Bad enough as it is—God forgive me—the Penance has been most bitter—<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> P. 425.

<sup>8</sup> P. 36.

<sup>9</sup> Quarto notebook used between 1825 and 1832, in the possession of the Rev. G. H. B. Coleridge, p. 178. Other similar accounts occur in Gillman's *Life of Coleridge*, pp. 246–248 (from another notebook), in a letter to Cottle (*Early Recollections*, ii, 157) and in a letter to Allsop (*Letters, Conversations, etc. of S.T.C.* [1864], pp. 41–42).

In a letter to Byron dated 10 April 1816 Coleridge refers to his "15 years habit" (*Unpublished Letters*, ii, 163); and in a letter probably written in April 1832 to the Rev. W. Worship he speaks of "Laudanum, which I had taken in enormous doses for 32 years." Writing, however, to the Rev. H. F. Cary on 23 April 1832 Coleridge mentions his "sudden emancipation from a thirty-three years' slavery" (*Letters*, ii, 760).

The passage from a contemporary transcript of the letter to the Rev. W. Worship I owe to the kindness of Miss F. C. Watson. The phrase, partly erased, occurs on the

On the other hand, Coleridge had certainly taken opium before 1800, and there are references which indicate that he felt at least that the seeds of danger had lurked in his previous experiences of the drug. In a now well-known note of 1810 he refers to "the retirement between Linton & Porlock" (when *Kubla Khan* was composed) as "the first occasion of my having recourse to Opium,"<sup>1</sup> and in another autobiographical note, dated 11 January 1805, he may be referring to opium doses of a still earlier date

It is a most instructive part of my Life the fact, that I have been always preyed on by some Dread, and perhaps all my faulty actions have been the consequences of some Dread or other in my mind / from fear of Pain, or Shame, not from prospect of Pleasure / — So in my childhood & Boyhood the horror of being detected with a sore head, afterwards imaginary fears of having the Itch in my Blood— / then a short lived Fit of Fears from sex—then horror of *Duns*, & a state of struggling with madness from an incapacity of hoping that I should be able to marry Mary Evans / and this strange passion of fervent tho' wholly imaginative and imaginary Love uncombinable by my utmost efforts with any regular Hope (possibly from deficiency of bodily feeling, or tactual ideas connected with the image) had all the effects of direct Fear, & I have lain for hours together awake at night, groaning & praying— Then came a stormy Time<sup>2</sup> and for a few months America really inspired Hope, & I became an exalted Being—then came Rob Southey's alienation / my marriage—constant dread in my mind respecting Mr Coleridge's Temper, &c— And finally

back of a half leaf of paper on the recto of which is the transcript of another letter to Worship. A reference in Mrs Watson's *Coleridge at Highgate*, p. 35 makes it clear that she regarded this as part of a letter to Worship also. The rest of the passage undoubtedly refers to the attempt to abandon opium which was made in March and April, 1832 (See *Unpublished Letters* II, 440-443).

Reconciliation of the statements to Byron and Worship need not cause trouble in view of Coleridge's well known inaccuracy over dates, but it is strange to find him, within a few weeks at most, giving different periods for the length of the habit. I suspect that in the letter to Cary 32 was misread 33. It is worth noting, too, that E. H. Coleridge did not print the letter from the original, but from *The Memoirs of the Rev. H. F. Cary*, 1847.

<sup>1</sup> First printed by E. K. Chambers in "The Date of Coleridge's *Kubla Khan*," *RES*, XI (1935), 79. If Coleridge means that this was the first occasion on which he had taken opium the statement is, of course, incorrect. It is possible, however, that he may mean that he took it for the first time not as a medicine but as a relief from mental strain, though this is not corroborated by the note on the surviving MS of *Kubla Khan* (see below, p. 28), or perhaps that it was the first time he took it without doctor's orders, though this is contradicted by the prefatory note published with *Kubla Khan* in 1816.

<sup>2</sup> Compare *The Prelude*, VI, 281-282, where Wordsworth, referring to the later part of Coleridge's undergraduate career and the period that immediately followed it, writes "What a stormy course Then followed."

stimulants in the fear & prevention of violent Bowel-attacks from mental agitation / then almost epileptic night-horrors in my sleep / & since then every error I have committed, has been the immediate effect of the Dread of these bad most shocking Dreams—any thing to prevent them / —all this interwoven with it's minor consequences, that fill up the interspaces—the cherry juice running in between the cherries in a cherry pie / procrastination in dread of this—& something else in consequence of that procrast. &c / —<sup>3</sup>

The evidence of the letters is more precise. A reference in 1791<sup>4</sup> probably contains a reminiscence of doses given him during an attack of rheumatic fever while he was still at school. After that nothing more is heard of the drug until 1796, when he wrote on 12 March, after a period of great distress, that "for this last fortnight I have been obliged to take Laudanum almost every night."<sup>5</sup> Later in the same year he suffered severely from neuralgia, and wrote to Poole on Saturday, 5 November, that on the previous Thursday, after twenty-four hours of intermittent pain, he had taken

between sixty and seventy drops of laudanum, and *sopped* the Cerberus, just as his mouth began to open. . . . But *this morning* he returned in full force, and his name is Legion. . . . My medical attendant decides it to be altogether nervous, . . . and I take twenty-five drops of laudanum every five hours.<sup>6</sup>

Cottle, Thelwall, and Lamb all received news of the attack,<sup>7</sup> which was succeeded in the following month by intervals of rheumatic pains, and there may well have been some further doses of laudanum.<sup>8</sup> The

<sup>3</sup> XXI, 246.

<sup>4</sup> *Unpublished Letters*, i, 3.

<sup>5</sup> *Unpublished Letters*, i, 46.

<sup>6</sup> *Letters*, i, 173-175.

<sup>7</sup> For the letter to Cottle, see *Unpublished Letters*, i, 59; for the letter to Thelwall, *Letters*, i, 193. The letter to Lamb has perished, but Lamb's letter to Coleridge of 8 November (*Letters of C. Lamb*, i, 53) makes it clear that he too had received a long account of Coleridge's ill-health.

<sup>8</sup> I have not considered as separate evidence the three references to the hero's opium-taking in Charles Lloyd's novel *Edmund Oliver* (quoted by Lowes, p. 599), since Lloyd was an inmate of Coleridge's house during November and part of December 1796, and almost certainly based his description on Coleridge's use of the drug at this time.

Abrams, it seems to me, makes far too much of Coleridge's use of opium at the end of 1796, and is inclined to see its influence where other explanations are not merely possible but more likely. For instance, Coleridge's plan, reported by De Quincey, for a poem, before *The Ancient Mariner* was thought of, "on delirium, confounding its own dream-scenery with internal things, and connected with the imagery of high latitudes," owed its origin in part not to opium, as Abrams suggests (p. 38), but to Lloyd's illness. On 15 November 1796 Coleridge wrote to Poole: "Charles Lloyd has been very ill,



next certain reference to the drug is in March 1798; an abscess at the root of a broken tooth had caused complications, and, he tells his brother George, "the sum of pain was considerably increased by the vain attempts of our surgeon to extract the offending member." Then follows:

Laudanum gave me repose, not sleep; but you, I believe, know how divine that repose is, what a spot of enchantment, a green spot of fountain and flowers and trees in the very heart of a waste of sands.<sup>9</sup>

Finally, there was the occasion, whenever it may have been,<sup>1</sup> when *Kubla Khan* was "composed in a Reverie brought on by two grains of Opium, taken to check a dysentery, at a Farm House between Porlock & Linton."<sup>2</sup> Any evidence that Coleridge made use of the drug in Germany is at best uncertain,<sup>3</sup> but he turned to it again in 1800, and soon

and his distemper (which may with equal propriety be named either Somnambulism, or frightful Reverie, or *Epilepsy from accumulated feelings*) is alarming. He falls at once into a kind of Night-mare: and all the Realities round him mingle with, and form part of, the strange Dream. All his voluntary powers are suspended; but he perceives every thing, and hears every thing, and whatever he perceives and hears he perverts into the substance of his delirious Vision" (*Unpublished Letters*, I, 62.) The descriptions of the dreams in lines 105-112, and especially lines 111-112, of the *Ode to the Departing Year*, also cited by Abrams (p. 62), may well be based as much on Lloyd's experiences as on his own. The "three months' visitation" of bad dreams "nine years ago," of which Coleridge speaks in a letter of 22 September 1803 to Sir George Beaumont (Abrams, p. 33), is much more likely to refer to the period of his unhappiness over Mary Evans, alluded to in the notebook entry quoted above (p. 26), than to this period.

<sup>9</sup> *Letters*, I, 238-240.

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<sup>2</sup> From the manuscript of *Kubla Khan* in the possession of the Marquess of Crewe. An account of it is given by A. D. Snyder, "The Manuscript of *Kubla Khan*," *T.L.S.*, 2 August 1934, p. 541.

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found himself emmeshed in toils from which he could not extricate himself.

There is no need to relate the full story of Coleridge's slavery to opium, and from the later history of the habit only one or two facts are relevant to the present enquiry. It is important to notice that the first signs of serious uneasiness about his habit that have survived occur in a letter of 16 November 1802 to his wife, in which he writes:

Once in twenty-four hours (but not always at the same time) I take half a grain of purified opium, equal to twelve drops of laudanum, which is not more than an eighth part of what I took at Keswick. . . . But I am fully convinced, and so is T. Wedgwood, that to a person with such a stomach and bowels as mine, if any stimulus is needful, opium in the small quantities I now take it is incomparably better in every respect than beer, wine, spirits, or any *fermented* liquor, nay, far less perhaps than even tea.<sup>4</sup>

Clearly Coleridge had been trying to diminish his doses, which by now had begun to alarm him. In normal cases of opium addiction the doses produce sensations of relief and pleasure for a period of from six to twelve months, and then the horrors begin; but the "bad most shocking Dreams" of which Coleridge wrote in the note of 11 January 1805<sup>5</sup>

and *Late Reflections*, i, 138-143, that Coleridge was given to reciting his own poems and commenting on them while he was in Germany. One has only to suppose that he had recited *Kubla Khan* on various occasions, and explained the circumstances of its composition, and it is easy to see how the rumour that he was an opium-taker should have been current in the university.

<sup>4</sup> *Letters*, i, 412-413. The whole passage, which is an extraordinary blend of self-deception and self-justification, is worth reading in full. For the notion of stimulation in relation to the medical theories of the time, see Lydia E. Wagner, "Coleridge's Use of Laudanum and Opium as connected with his interest in contemporary investigations concerning stimulation and sensation," *Psychoanalytic Review*, xxv (1938), 309-334.

<sup>5</sup> Such dreams also made De Quincey's sleep his "bitterest scourge," and are the theme of the section on "The Pains of Opium" in his *Confessions*. In a passage found in his original manuscript, but not published, he wrote: "At length I grew afraid to sleep, and I shrank from it as from the most savage torture. Often I fought with my drowsiness, and kept it aloof by sitting up the whole night and the following day." (*Confessions*, ed. R. Garnett [1895], pp. 263-264.)

Other testimony concerning the horrors of the addict's dreams is not hard to find, and two brief passages may be quoted here:

Were the question asked, "Which one of all the distressing results of the opium habit was most horrible?" the answer would be prompt and swift, "The dreams of the night." (W. R. Cobbe, *Dr. Judas, a portrayal of the opium habit* [Chicago, 1895], p. 251.)

No dark imagery can paint the encompassing horrors of those nights of torment that belonged to the last two months of my twelve months' morphia addiction. Not one hour that I passed in bed between midnight and noon did I know normal sleep. In dreams that seemed more vivid than reality, I entered gloomy caves, and walked for

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do not seem to have become constant until the second half of 1803, close to the time when *The Pains of Sleep* was written.<sup>6</sup>

The available evidence shows, then, that before his departure for Germany in September 1798 Coleridge had taken opium at four periods during the preceding three years: in March and November 1796, in March 1798, and at the time of the composition of *Kubla Khan*. There is no need to believe that even one so lacking in reticence as Coleridge should have recorded every dose of laudanum he took during these years, but it is surely unwise to infer, as Abrams does,<sup>7</sup> that he took it every time he was unwell or out of spirits. Had he done so the habit would have been well established months before he set out for Germany. As it is, the early references to the drug are quite open; they are not those of a man who has something to hide. Though there was very real danger in his increasing knowledge of the effects of the drug, serious consequences might still have been averted.

Attention has not previously been drawn to the fact that in both November 1796 and March 1798 Coleridge mentions that he had had medical attention.<sup>8</sup> The laudanum was probably prescribed for him by a doctor. The prescription of laudanum was fully in accord with the medical practice of the time, and where quantities are mentioned they are such as seem to indicate normal medical doses. John Jones, in *The Mysteries of Opium Revealed* (1701), provides a table of doses, graduated for "weak women," "weak men and midling women," "midling

hours over rotten cadavers, sometimes forced to step on them and be overwhelmed with loathsome odors. I saw faces in the weird darkness, sometimes a thousand at once, and each was made of blood-red flame; they flashed and went out. My nightmarish brain was chased and haunted by everything that can exist in a vast hell of phantoms. (Quoted by H. H. Kane, *Drugs that Enslave* [Philadelphia, 1881], p. 51, from *N.Y. Medical Record*, xiii, 399 ff.)

<sup>6</sup> This is the impression one forms not merely from Coleridge's correspondence (*Letters*, i, 435-437, 440; *Unpublished Letters*, i, 270, 276-277, 280-281, 286-287; *Memorials of Coleridge*, i, 7) but from the notebooks as well. In the notebooks there is one dream (possibly the result of an overdose) recorded as early as 28 November 1800 (IV) but there are no more until 1803. The interval, assuming that the habit started no earlier than the winter of 1800-1801, is even then longer than one would expect, but the smallness of the doses recorded in the letter of 16 November 1802 (see above, p. 29) suggests that the habit advanced less rapidly than usual. These conclusions might seem to be contradicted by the note of 11 January 1805 (quoted on p. 26), but there is a considerable telescoping of events in that note, and Coleridge has selected only those which bear on his theme.

<sup>7</sup> Pp. 56-60. To speak of "continued addiction" during November and December 1796 (p. 58) is not to know the meaning of "addiction."

<sup>8</sup> And in the published preface describing the origin of *Kubla Khan* he states that "In consequence of a slight indisposition, an anodyne had been prescribed."

men and strong women," and "strong men," with the proviso that "I have been so cautious in dosing all the *Opiates*, that you may safely give the highest Doses to all, but very weak Persons." <sup>9</sup> For a strong man a normal dose is 20 to 40 drops, or from one to two grains. Samuel Crumpe, whose *Inquiry into the Nature and Uses of Opium* (1793) was probably the last word on the subject at the time, states that

It is generally given to the unaccustomed to the amount of a grain. Of the tinctures properly prepared, from twenty to thirty drops are the usual doses. These doses, however, it generally becomes necessary to augment, and sometimes to very considerable quantities.<sup>1</sup>

He distinguishes between the use of the drug as a stimulant and as an anodyne. As a stimulant it should be given "in moderate quantities frequently repeated, at the interval of a few hours, as the symptoms of the complaint require," but

In such complaints as are accompanied by urgent pain, irritation or watchfulness, and Opium is given with an intention of mitigating or removing them, a contrary plan is to be pursued, and the medicine given in a pretty considerable dose.<sup>2</sup>

Among the numerous complaints for which opium is recommended he approves of it as part of the treatment for rheumatic pains and for diarrhoea.<sup>3</sup> Writing of dysentery, he cites Sydenham's prescription of it in doses of 25 drops every eight hours, and comments later:

I am very much inclined to suspect that many authors have been led to consider Opium as either useless or pernicious in dysentery, merely from not having given it at sufficiently short intervals, or in sufficient doses. Nothing, for instance, is more common than giving an anodyne at night, which eases and composes the patient; and, in the morning, when its efficacy is worn out, . . . recourse is had to some irritating purgative.<sup>4</sup>

Last of all, one may cite the doses recommended in a comparatively modern work, which indicates medical practice before the present legal restrictions on the drug. S. H. Aurand's *Botanical Materia Medica and Pharmacology*, published at Chicago in 1899, recommends somewhat more cautious dosing: one grain of solid opium, or from one to twenty

<sup>9</sup> Pp. 294-295.

<sup>1</sup> P. 217.

<sup>2</sup> P. 218.

<sup>3</sup> Pp. 258-264, especially pp. 263-264, and p. 295.

<sup>4</sup> P. 286.

drops of laudanum;<sup>5</sup> but, on the whole, the quantities administered changed remarkably little in two hundred years. "Between sixty and seventy drops," mentioned in Coleridge's letter to Poole, was a large dose if it were all taken at once (which is not asserted), but it would not have been regarded as a dangerous one, and might have seemed warranted by special circumstances; the "twenty-five drops of laudanum every five hours" mentioned later in the same letter was normal dosing, and even the two grains which produced *Kubla Khan* do not exceed the limits of Jones's prescriptions. In 1802, after the habit had been formed, if his letter to his wife is to be trusted, the total of about 100 drops a day at Keswick, to which he admits, is still practically within medical limits. That it had become a daily necessity was, of course, the tragedy, but it is clear that he had not yet reached "the enormous doses," to which he looked back in 1832, that varied "from two quarts of laudanum a week to a pint a day; and on one occasion [he] had been known to take, in the twenty-four hours, a whole quart of laudanum," as gossip informed Cottle in 1814.<sup>6</sup>

Another fact about the doses in the years 1796-1798 is significant. Individuals vary enormously in their responses to drugs, and John Jones's classification of human types first by sex and then as "strong," "midling," and "weak" is hopelessly inadequate. Even though Coleridge's doses may have been prescribed by a medical man and did not exceed the limits of the pharmacopoeia, they were nevertheless overdoses. Besides "a long and flighty" letter to Poole, the doses of November 1796 were responsible for some strange ocular phenomena Coleridge described in the Gutch memorandum book:

a dusky light—a purple *flash*  
crystalline splendor—light blue—  
*Green* lightnings—;<sup>7</sup>

those of March 1798 brought "repose, not sleep"—"a kind of dubious state between sleeping and waking," as Jones calls it;<sup>8</sup> and yet another

<sup>5</sup> P. 262.

<sup>6</sup> *Early Recollections*, ii, 169.

<sup>7</sup> F. 77b. To Abrams belongs the credit of interpreting this note. There is no doubt as to its date (see Lowes, p. 517), and it was recognised as early as the time of Jones that the "appearance of divers Colours" was one of the "effects of opium taken in an excessive quantity" (*The Mysteries of Opium Revealed*, pp. 29, 239).

<sup>8</sup> P. 26. This is the type of reverie that De Quincey describes when he tells that "from sunset to sunrise, all through the hours of night, I have continued motionless, as if frozen, without consciousness of myself as of an object anywise distinct from the multifarious scene which I contemplated." (*Works*, iii, 394-395.)

dose produced *Kubla Khan*. Practically all the writers on the psychological results of opium speak of various effects as due to "continued use or to an overdose," and there can be no doubt that the drug had much more effect on Coleridge than was necessary for the purely medicinal end for which it was taken.

Are there, then, any traces of opium experiences in *The Ancient Mariner*? I think that it can be said without doubt that there are. Opium mysteriously intensifies some types of sensation; for instance, as one authority states, "l'ouïe devient d'une délicatesse exquise; les moindres bruits sont perçus, . . . la marche d'un insecte sur le sol, . . . le froissement d'une herbe," and such extreme auditory sensibility is suggested in

With far-heard whisper, o'er the sea  
Off shot the spectre-bark.<sup>9</sup>

There are recollections, too, of the horrors of opium in

The Night-mare Life-in-Death was she,  
Who thicks man's blood with cold,

and in

Fear at my heart, as at a cup,  
My life-blood seemed to sip;

and the same unreasoning sense of fear in dreams is described more fully in *Remorse*:

O sleep of horrors! Now run down and stared at  
By forms so hideous that they mock remembrance—  
Now seeming nothing and imagining nothing,  
But only being afraid—stified with fear!  
While every goodly or familiar form  
Had a strange power of breathing terror round me!<sup>1</sup>

After the last passage, especially the first two lines, it is also difficult to avoid the impression that the simile in *The Ancient Mariner* describing the ship in a storm comes from such dreams:

<sup>9</sup> Both the quotation and the example are used by Abrams, p. 25. The quotation is from R. Dupouy, *Les Opimanes* (Paris, 1912), p. 93. Miss Coburn points out to me that the lines from *The Ancient Mariner* may also owe something to Coleridge's actual experiences during a calm in the Mediterranean: "Thurs May 10th / pretty well—a calm and between 4 & 5 the Ships so near each other that the Cocks answered each other from 2 or 3 Coops—sweet Image for a Calm" (XV, 74).

<sup>1</sup> IV, i, 68–73.



With sloping masts and dripping prow,  
 As who pursued with yell and blow  
 Still treads the shadow of his foe,  
 And forward bends his head,  
 The ship drove fast, . . .

Two passages from the notebooks will illustrate what experiences Coleridge had in mind when he wrote all these verses. The first extract, though written as late as 1820, not only corroborates the impressions described in the passage from *Remorse*, but is also the best commentary on the phrase "Life-in-Death":

June 30th, 1820—Night. & 1 July, Morning strange & fearful Dreams, so distinct & conscience-like—after the *σαδ νευσε φρομ Οριελ* <sup>2</sup>—The effort, I believing myself to have departed this life. O let me still pray to God!—God must still be here! & the prayer, soon after which I awoke.—How like the Hell of Swedenborg it appeared—how completely conceivable (some malignant, but all perfectly unbenignant, Spirits) did the different human Beings appear.—But the terror which I write this to preserve is—Life *without breathing*—not always a positive torture of deprivation of Breathing—but often a *more negative—not to breathe*—fearfully symbolical of a spiritual Life, but why say spiritual only?—of Life without continued successive feeling of dependence on God, of food of Life asked each moment & granted—O recollect in waking thought, that every free Breath is = God has not rejected me! <sup>3</sup>

The second extract is from one of the most brilliant passages of psychological analysis Coleridge ever wrote. It describes some of the torments of opium; although it is entitled "Elucidation of my all-zermalming argument on the subject of ghosts & apparitions" (which Coleridge regarded as purely subjective),<sup>4</sup> it is concerned primarily with what he believed to be their cause—the impressions formed in dreams and nightmares, and the sensations which accompany them:

Last night before awaking or rather delivery from the night-mair—in which a claw-like talon-mailed Hand grasped hold of me, interposed between the curtains, I had just before with my foot felt something seeming to move against it (for in my foot it commenced)—I detected it, I say, by my excessive Terror, and dreadful Trembling of my whole body, Trunk

<sup>2</sup> Of Hartley's expulsion from his fellowship.

<sup>3</sup> XXIII, 31.

<sup>4</sup> For other discussions of this subject see *The Friend*, First Landing Place, Essay III (Bohn ed., pp. 88–90) and *Table Talk*, Jan. 3, 1823, and May 1, 1823 (Bohn ed., pp. 20–21 and 32).

& Limbs—& by my piercing outcries—Good Heaven! (reasoned I) were this real, I never should or could be, in such an agony of Terror.—

In short, the Night-mair is not properly a *Dream*; but a species of Reverie, akin to Somnambulism, during which the Understanding & moral Sense are awake, tho' more or less confused, and over the Terrors of which the Reason can exert no influence, because it is not true Terror; i. e. apprehension of Danger, but a sensation as much as the Tooth-ache or Cramp—i. e. the Terror does not *arise* out of a painful Sensation, but is itself a specific sensation = Terror corporeus sive materialis.<sup>5</sup>

These are the nightmares, this the terror, which Coleridge had known when he wrote the lines in *The Ancient Mariner* and *Remorse* which have been cited.

The four passages from *The Ancient Mariner* appeared in their present form for the first time in 1817, and the lines from *Remorse* are not to be found in *Osorio*. They were therefore all written after the opium habit had become firmly established, and can tell us nothing about the influences at work in Coleridge's mind in 1797 and 1798. The question, accordingly, still remains. I believe that the possibility of the influence of opium on *The Ancient Mariner* must be considered seriously, though at the time of its composition Coleridge's experiences of the drug were still those of a neophyte. Yet, as we have seen, he knew something of its more pleasant effects, and may even have had one or two startling dreams produced by an overdose, though surely he knew almost nothing of the horrors it was to bring later. Such arguments as can be adduced in support of the influence of opium on *The Ancient Mariner* as originally written depend on general characteristics of the poem rather than on individual passages; none of them is conclusive in itself, but their effect is cumulative, and, though one can hardly state dogmatically that these influences must have been active, it is at least equally impossible to assert that they cannot have been present.

<sup>5</sup> XVIII, 271-275. The passage from which this extract is taken is printed, with omissions, in *Anima Poetae*, pp. 243-245.

It may have puzzled some readers of *Anima Poetae* that Coleridge should have distinguished between dreams and nightmares, which to most people are merely unpleasant dreams. Coleridge seems to have appropriated the term to a special class of opium phenomena, viz., the hallucinations which sometimes afflict the addict in a waking or semi-waking state. The earlier part of the passage quoted from shows that Coleridge suffered from "nightmares" after a period of wakefulness just as he was dropping off to sleep.

Dupouy (*Les Opimanes*, pp. 118-120) analyses these opium phenomena at some length, and states that "Les hallucinations de la rêverie, quand elles existent, précèdent la torpeur terminale" (p. 120).

It is not generally known that Coleridge acknowledged an intellectual debt to opium, but in 1808 he wrote in one of his notebooks:

Need we wonder at Plato's opinions concerning the Body, at least, need that man wonder whom a *pernicious Drug* shall make capable of conceiving & bringing forth Thoughts, hidden in him before, which shall call forth the deepest feelings of his best, greatest, & sanest Contemporaries? and this proved to him by actual experience?—But can subtle strings set in greater tension do this?—or is it not, that the dire poison for a delusive time has made the body, i. e. the *organization*, not the articulation (or instruments of motion) the unknown somewhat, a fitter Instrument for the all-powerful Soul.<sup>6</sup>

The reference is probably not to his poems, but to his metaphysical discoveries of the winter of 1800–1801, and the contemporaries to whom he refers were doubtless Wordsworth, Davy, and Tom Wedgwood. But the admission renders it all the more possible that earlier experiences of opium should have had an inspiring effect on his poetry, and have made him conscious of images and impressions, as well as of thoughts, "hidden in him before." Another notebook passage, of October 1803, (of which a part is printed in *Anima Poetae*,<sup>7</sup> though under the wrong date) emphasises the fact that it actually had this very effect:

O Heaven when I think how perishable Things, how imperishable Thoughts seem to be!—For what is Forgetfulness? Renew the state of affection or bodily Feeling, same or similar—sometimes dimly similar / and instantly the trains of forgotten Thought rise from their living catacombs!—Old men, & Infancy / and Opium, probably by it's narcotic effect on the whole seminal organization, in a large Dose, or after long use, produces the same effect on the *visual & passive memory* / .<sup>8</sup>

"The trains of forgotten Thought rise from their living catacombs!"; "Opium, . . . in a large Dose, or after long use, produces the same effect on the *visual & passive memory*." This is the process by which *Kubla Khan* came into being. Stirred by the passage from Purchas, fragments from Bartram and Bruce, from Maurice and Marco Polo, from Milton and Virgil, rose from their living catacombs and presented themselves visually in Coleridge's mind. Behind some of the most unforgettable word-pictures of *The Ancient Mariner*, which carry on them the stamp of things seen if any verses ever did, Lowes has traced a

<sup>6</sup> XXI ½, 11–12.

<sup>7</sup> P. 8.

<sup>8</sup> XXI, 102. This passage is a comment added while Coleridge was transcribing some earlier notes that were originally written in 1799.

similar medley of recollections mysteriously combined. Nowhere else among Coleridge's poems, as far as we yet know,<sup>9</sup> do such intricate combinations of associated memories occur, and the temptation to ascribe them, in part at least, to the same cause is strong. I am not suggesting that any of *The Ancient Mariner* was composed in an opium vision—but at the most that opium was instrumental in raising up visual impressions which, when recalled, stirred the throng of verbal recollections still lurking below the surface.

One of the most penetrating chapters of Lowes's book is that in which he distinguishes between the coherence and imaginative unity of *The Ancient Mariner* and the shifting, dream-like, scenery of *Kubla Khan*.<sup>1</sup> *Kubla Khan* arose spontaneously, but *The Ancient Mariner* was completed only after four months of arduous and concentrated toil. "Superb, unwavering imaginative control is the very essence of the poem," but, he adds, "that is not the gift of opium," and, after quoting De Quincey's assertion that "Opium gives and takes away. It defeats the steady habit of exertion; but it creates spasms of irregular exertion," he repeats that "The very quality which opium defeats is the quality which *The Ancient Mariner* signally displays."<sup>2</sup> But he has forgotten that Coleridge was not an addict when *The Ancient Mariner* was written; De Quincey's remark helps to explain why after 1800 Coleridge never attempted any poem of equal length, and why *Christabel* was never finished, but it does not invalidate the possibility which has just been suggested.<sup>3</sup>

It is well known that in the 1800 edition of *Lyrical Ballads* *The Ancient Mariner* bore the sub-title "A Poet's Reverie." This apologetic explanation brought forth a famous protest from Charles Lamb:

I am sorry that Coleridge has christened his Ancient Marinere "a poet's Reverie"—it is as bad as Bottom the Weaver's declaration that he is not a Lion but only the scenical representation of a Lion. What new idea is

<sup>9</sup> It is worth noting that A. H. Nethercot in his recently published *Road to Tryermaine* (Chicago, 1939) is unable to find any similar coalescing of associated recollections in *Christabel*.

<sup>1</sup> Chapter XX.

<sup>2</sup> P. 424.

<sup>3</sup> Dupouy (*Les Opiomanes*, p. 111) maintains that for a time opium actually favors poetic creation: "La rêverie des fumeurs d'opium est, à son début, une rêverie active et c'est à ce moment que les sujets dont les facultés ne sont pas éteintes peuvent faire oeuvre intellectuelle, oeuvre surtout d'imagination, c'est-à-dire oratoire ou poétique: les associations s'effectuent rapides, multiples, parfois ingénieuses et créatrices. Mais, si l'on pousse plus loin l'usage de l'opium, la rêverie ne tarde pas à perdre son caractère volitionnel et à devenir automatique: c'est alors l'incohérence et l'illusion du songe."

gained by this Title, but one subversive of all credit, which the tale should force upon us, of its truth? For me, I was never so affected with any human Tale. After first reading it, I was possessed with it for many days— I dislike all the miraculous part of it, but the feelings of the man under the operation of such scenery dragged me along like Tom Piper's magic whistle. I totally differ from your idea that the *Mannere* should have had a character and profession. This is a Beauty in *Gulliver's Travels*, where the mind is kept in a placid state of little wonderments; but the Ancient Marinere undergoes such Trials, as overwhelm and bury all individuality or memory of what he was, like the state of a man in a Bad dream, one terrible peculiarity of which is that all consciousness of personality is gone.<sup>4</sup>

Though, significantly enough, Lamb compared some of the sensations aroused by the poem to those of a dream, he objected to the implications of the sub-title. Lowes is equally emphatic: "If there is anything on earth which *The Ancient Mariner* is *not*, it is a reverie."<sup>5</sup> But another possibility has occurred to Abrams: "Might it not refer," he asks in a footnote,<sup>6</sup> "to the opium revery in which the material first took shape?" Confirmation that Coleridge used the word in this sense is to be found in the note on the manuscript of *Kubla Khan* stating that it was "composed in a sort of Reverie brought on by two grains of Opium," and again in a note, probably written in October 1806, which contains the germ of Coleridge's analysis of nightmare:

Strong proof of the imaginary nature of Ghosts / i. e. the sensation in the *ex toto* of Nature producing the Ghost, not the Ghost the Terror, they [*sic*] (as from black dreams & reveries) no Ghost-seer dies or is the worst [*sic*] / whereas compare the frightful effects of tricks to frighten people, ideotcy, madness / <sup>7</sup>

In both passages the word "reverie" refers to states induced by opium. But the matter is more complicated than this.

The addition of the sub-title of 1800 is explained, I believe, by Wordsworth's criticism of the poem in the note at the end of the first volume. The third of the defects enumerated there was "that the events having no necessary connection do not produce each other." Coleridge's sub-title was at once an admission of the truth of this criticism and an attempt at justification. His reply, be it noted, was substantially the same

<sup>4</sup> *Letters*, 1, 240.

<sup>5</sup> P. 307.

<sup>6</sup> P. 75

<sup>7</sup> XI, 7.

as the one he gave to Mrs. Barbauld's objection that the poem had no moral:

I told her that in my opinion the poem had too much . . . It ought to have had no more moral than the "Arabian Nights" tale of the merchant's sitting down to eat dates by the side of a well, and throwing the shells aside, and lo! a genie starts up, and says he *must* kill the aforesaid merchant, because one of the date shells had, it seems, put out the eye of the genie's son.<sup>8</sup>

The relationship of Coleridge's two comments on the poem will be made clearer by examining further the significance which he attached to the word "reverie."

The key is to be found in Coleridge's conception of "the streamy nature of association." Though, as we have seen, in his maturity he regarded the principle of association as "strictly speaking a law only of the memory & [primary?] imagination, of the stuff out of which we make our conceptions & perceptions, not of the thinking faculty, *by* which we make them," he was "neither ignorant [of], nor idle in observing, the vast extent and multifold activity of the Associative Force." The stream of association, he held, will flow at any stage of consciousness, and its force is greater as the controls imposed on it are diminished. Normally, thinking "curbs and rudders" it,<sup>9</sup> *i.e.*, restrains it and determines its direction, but if all controls are removed it becomes sheer delirium.<sup>1</sup> In delirium the mind is entirely passive,<sup>2</sup> and dreaming is nearest to delirium, though there "the *streaming* continuum of passive association is broken into *zig-zag* by sensations from within or from without."<sup>3</sup> But between the normal modes of mental *activity* and the passivity of dreaming there are various states in which the usual controls imposed by the will and the reason are relaxed in differing degrees, and to these Coleridge applied the inclusive term "reverie." It included not merely ordinary day-dreaming, but, as we have seen, opium reveries

<sup>8</sup> *Table Talk*, 31 May 1830 (Bohn ed., p. 87).

<sup>9</sup> *Anima Poetae*, p. 55.

<sup>1</sup> "What is the height and ideal of mere association? Delirium." *Anima Poetae*, p. 56.

<sup>2</sup> *Biographia Literaria*, i, 77 and 226.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, i, 225. Cf. "Images and thoughts possess a power in, and of themselves, independent of that act of the judgment or understanding by which we affirm or deny the existence of a reality correspondent to them. Such is the ordinary state of the mind in dreams. It is not strictly accurate to say that we believe our dreams to be actual while we are dreaming. We neither believe it, nor disbelieve it. With the will the comparing power is suspended, and without the comparing power, any act of judgment, whether affirmation or denial, is impossible." *Letters*, ii, 663.

and "nightmares" <sup>4</sup> as well. And Coleridge, we scarcely need to be told, was one of those "who are most reverie-ish and streamy." <sup>5</sup>

In reverie, then, some of the usual barriers are down, and the restraints imposed by reality are no longer heeded. The mind, relaxing its controls, is sometimes participant, sometimes spectator, as the thronging carnival of associations streams by. In this state it will be impatient of the rigid demands of causality and refuse to listen to the behests of anything except its own pleasure. Why should not the date shell put out the eye of the genie's son, and why should the angry father not have his vengeance? In reverie—day-dream, nightmare, or opium vision—the mind does not insist that successive thoughts and images should have all the "necessary connections" by which they "produce each other" in the world of reality; association has supplied the connections, and these suffice.<sup>6</sup> This is what Coleridge had in mind when he called *The Ancient Mariner* "a Poet's Reverie," and by so doing he related it to the class of experiences which included certain states produced by opium.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> "The Night mair is not, properly, a *Dream* but a species of Reverie, akin to Somnambulism, during which the Understanding and moral Sense are awake, tho' more or less confused, and over the Terrors of which the Reason can exert no influence" (XVIII, 273)

<sup>5</sup> *Anima Poetae*, pp. 65–66

<sup>6</sup> Dupouy writes illuminatingly of opium reverie: "La rêverie des fumeurs d'opium est, à son début, une rêverie active. Les associations s'effectuent rapides, multiples, parfois ingénieuses et créatrices. Ce qui spécifie essentiellement la rêverie des fumeurs d'opium, en plus son caractère euphorique et mégalomane, est une hyper-idéation associative et une hypermnésie de reproduction momentanées avec diminution progressive de l'attention consciente et de la volonté, c'est-à-dire avec tendance croissante à la passivité et à l'automatisme mental" (p. 111)

<sup>7</sup> The quality of the poem emphasised by Coleridge in his remarks to Mrs. Barbauld and in his 1800 sub title is thus described by Lowes (p. 303): "Its world is, in essence, the world of a dream. Its inconsequence is the dream's irrelevance, and by a miracle of art we are possessed, as we read, with that sense of an intimate logic, consecutive and irresistible and more real than reality, which is a dream's supreme illusion." Further testimony as to its dream-like character is brought together by Elizabeth Nitchie in "The Moral of the 'Ancient Mariner' Reconsidered" *PMLA*, xlviii (1933), 867 ff. at 869–870, but in the light of Coleridge's psychology his own classification of it as a "reverie" seems more accurate.

Lest it should be objected that Coleridge might not have used 'reverie' with a full sense of its psychological implications until after 1800, it is important to turn back to the passage in the letter of 15 November 1796, in which he describes Lloyd's disorder (see above, p. 28). That passage contains the germ of his later theory, and its use of "reverie" shows that he had already begun to use the word in an almost technical sense.

The passage is also interesting as showing that at some points Coleridge had advanced far beyond Hartley even as early as 1796. Proposition 91 of the *Observations on Man* examines "how far the Phenomena of Imagination, Reveries, and Dreams, are agreeable to the foregoing Theory" of association. To Hartley "the recurrence of ideas, especially

Among many notes which refer to dreams of pain and horror and disgust, there is but one in Coleridge's notebooks, as far as I am aware, which contains an account of his sensations while opium was exerting its beneficent and magic sway:

When in a state of pleasurable & balmy Quietness I feel my Cheek and Temple on the nicely made up Pillow in Cœlibe Toro meo, the fire-gleam on my dear Books, that fill up one whole side from ceiling to floor of my Tall Study—& winds perhaps are driving the rain or whistling in frost, at my blessed Window, whence I see Borrodale, the Lake, Newlands—wood, water, mountains, omniform Beauty— O then as I first sink on the pillow, as if Sleep had indeed a material *realm*, as if when I sank on my pillow, I was entering that region & realized Faery Land of Sleep— O then what visions have I had, what dreams—the Bark, the Sea, till the shapes & sounds & adventures made up of the Stuff of Sleep & Dreams, & yet my Reason at the Rudder / O what visions, . . . & I sink down the waters, thro' Seas & Seas—yet warm, yet a Spirit / . . . <sup>8</sup>

Two things are of surpassing interest here. Though there has been a surrender of volition, and the mind gives itself up to a succession of "shapes & sounds & adventures," it is not a true dream, but a reverie, for "Reason [is] at the Rudder;" and, secondly, in 1803 Coleridge could look back on such reveries in which nautical imagery had been predominant. Expanses of water—lakes and seas—seem to be characteristic of many opium visions,<sup>9</sup> and we know from De Quincey how the imagery of the dreams tends to repeat itself. One can hardly avoid the conclusion that Coleridge's early opium experiences, before the habit had been established or *The Ancient Mariner* had been written, when his mind was filled to overflowing with reminiscences of his reading in the old travellers, must have sent him voyaging through the strange and haunted seas to which he afterwards sent his Ancient Mariner.

Some sentences of De Quincey draw attention to a further characteristic of opium. "It is certain," he writes, "that some merely physical agencies can and do assist the faculty of dreaming almost preternat-

visible and audible ones, in a vivid manner, but without any regard to the order observed in past facts, is ascribed to the power of imagination or fancy, . . . a reverie differs from imagination only in that the person being more attentive to his own thoughts, and less disturbed by foreign objects, more of his ideas are deducible from association, and fewer from new impressions, . . . and dreams are nothing but the imaginations, fancies, or reveries of a sleeping man." It is clear that Coleridge had studied this section with the closest attention, though it scarcely contains a sentence to which he could have given his unreserved approval.

<sup>8</sup> XVI, 50-51. Written early in December 1803.

<sup>9</sup> Abrams, p. 66.



urally. . . . Beyond all others is opium: which indeed seems to possess a *specific* power in that direction; not merely for exalting the colours of dream-scenery, but for deepening its shadows, and, above all, for strengthening the sense of its fearful realities."<sup>1</sup> Opium "exalts the colours of dream-scenery." As we have seen, "appearance of Colours" was one of the recognised effects of too large a dose, and one experienced by Coleridge before the end of 1796. Lest Abrams's interpretation of the relevant passage from the Gutch memorandum book should be questioned, it will be well to confirm it with other similar ones from the later notebooks. The extracts to be quoted belong to the end of 1803, a time at which Coleridge recorded an unusual number of opium experiences:

Purple *St[r]eams* in manifold Shapes, but angular—& then white or flesh-colored Streaks with Dark Streak / or Dustiness streaked with Life & Flesh.

[*deletion*] but overpowered with the Phænomena I arose, lit my Candle, & wrote—of figures, even with open eyes / of squares, & II, of various colours, & I know not what /

How in a few minutes I forgot such an Assemblage of distinct Impressions, ebullitions & piles of golden colour & thence to think of the Nature of Memory. So intense! & yet in one Minute forgotten! the same is in Dreams / <sup>2</sup>

Further, De Quincey's statement about the color-elements in opium visions is all the more significant, since it seems to be agreed that in normal dreaming color sensations are comparatively rare.<sup>3</sup>

Anyone who has attempted to analyse the impression made on him by *The Ancient Mariner* will agree, I think, that it is a poem of colors and sounds, and that the emotions to which it appeals are those of wonder and fear. It is strange that impressions of shape and form are so rare; the most vivid of them in the poem is not stated, but only suggested by simile and question:

Are those *her* ribs through which the Sun  
Did peer, as through a grate? . . .  
Is that a Death?

<sup>1</sup> *Works*, xiii, 335. Coleridge himself has written: "Dreams sometimes useful by giving to the well-grounded fears and hopes of the understanding the feeling of vivid sense" (Gutch memorandum book, f. 27b).

<sup>2</sup> XVI, 77 and 65-66.

<sup>3</sup> Havelock Ellis, *The World of Dreams*, pp. 33-35. Dupouy also writes (p. 172): "Les images du rêve d'opium ont encore cette note particulière d'être plus colorées, plus nettes, surtout plus rapides que celles du rêve habituel et normal."

Yet the types of sensation on which *The Ancient Mariner* most depends for its effect are those which are most heightened by opium. In particular, some of the color effects seem extraordinarily concentrated. One has only to read the description of the water-snakes alongside the passages from the voyagers quoted by Lowes in Chapter IV to perceive that everything else has dropped away as irrelevant; the colors alone remain. The resulting vividness is unsurpassed, for the lines convey all the reality of things actually seen. And are we not conscious both here and in many other parts of the poem that Coleridge's conscious art has devoted itself to the task of reproducing and reinforcing his original impression of a reality—sometimes a "fearful reality"—heightened and strengthened beyond the bounds of normal experience?

J. M. Robertson, in indicating the difference between *The Ancient Mariner* and *Kubla Khan* on the one hand and Coleridge's previous work on the other, emphasises the fact that "they are both abnormal to his whole previous technique."<sup>4</sup> "Technique" in this context is an unfortunate term, for the difference is much deeper than one of form and expression. Coleridge's whole manner of seeing and feeling has changed, and the difference is so great as to be explained only by an intensification of his capacity for experience. His perceptions have been widened and sharpened. One cause of the change was undoubtedly, as Lowes insists,<sup>5</sup> his association with the Wordsworths, but I cannot feel that it was the sole one. Even when it is allowed the fullest weight possible, there still remains much to be explained.

In spite of Coleridge's reverence for Wordsworth and Wordsworth's influence on Coleridge, Coleridge soon realised that there was a difference in their powers which made it impossible for them to use identical methods, as is proved by the failure of *The Three Graves*, where he tried to handle a Wordsworthian subject in close imitation of Wordsworth's manner and treatment. The beneficial effects of the influence of the Wordsworths (and of Dorothy just as much as William) are most clearly seen in the group of poems which are a natural development from some of the best of Coleridge's early verses, such as *The Eolian Harp*, viz., in *This Lime-Tree Bower my Prison*, written at the beginning of the intimacy, in *Frost at Midnight*, and in *The Nightingale*. These poems, it is true, contain evidence of wider and sharper perceptions, but not in the same direction as those revealed in *The Ancient Mariner*. In them there is a delight in observation, an interest in

<sup>4</sup> P. 139.

<sup>5</sup> Pp. 419-423.

forms, a desire to distinguish and be precise, and an eye for a multitude of details unnoticed before. Such are the perceptions in lines like

The roaring dell, o'erwooded, narrow, deep,  
And only speckled by the mid-day sun;  
Where its slim trunk the ash from rock to rock  
Flings arching like a bridge;—that branchless ash  
Unsun'd and damp, whose few poor yellow leaves  
Ne'er tremble in the gale, yet tremble still  
Fann'd by the water-fall! and there my friends  
Behold the dark green file of long lank weeds,  
That all at once (a most fantastic sight!)  
Still nod and drip beneath the dripping edge  
Of the blue clay-stone,<sup>6</sup>

and

never elsewhere in one place I knew  
So many nightingales; and far and near,  
In wood and thicket, over the wide grove,  
They answer and provoke each other's song,  
With skirmish and capricious passagings,  
And murmurs musical and swift jug jug,  
And one low piping sound more sweet than all—  
Stirring the air with such a harmony,  
That should you close your eyes, you might almost  
Forget it was not day! On moonlight bushes,  
Whose dewy leaflets are but half-disclosed,  
You may perchance behold them on the twigs,  
Their bright, bright eyes, their eyes both bright and full,  
Glistening, while many a glow-worm in the shade  
Lights up her love-torch;<sup>7</sup>

and at the same time there comes a deepening sense, which runs through all three poems, that

Nature ne'er deserts the wise and pure;  
No plot so narrow, be but Nature there,  
No waste so vacant, but may well employ  
Each faculty of sense, and keep the heart  
Awake to Love and Beauty!<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> *This Lime-Tree Bower my Prison*, lines 10–20.

<sup>7</sup> *The Nightingale*, lines 55–69.

<sup>8</sup> *This Lime-Tree Bower my Prison*, lines 60–64.

In such passages one can recognise and acclaim the influence of the Wordsworths, but in such stanzas of *The Ancient Mariner* as

About, about, in reel and rout  
The death-fires danced at night;  
The water, like a witch's oils,  
Burnt green, and blue, and white,

or

The bay was white with silent light  
Till rising from the same,  
Full many shapes, that shadows were,  
In crimson colours came.

A little distance from the prow  
Those crimson shadows were:  
I turned my eyes upon the deck—  
Oh, Christ! what saw I there!

the mere visualisation which preceded the words is as different from anything that Wordsworth had expressed as it is from anything that Coleridge had previously written.

If opium helped to create the fabric of *The Ancient Mariner*, it gave the narrative something of its form and character; it helped to quicken into new and strange life whole groups of thronging memories; and it gave to Coleridge's inner eye a visionary power more intense and concentrated than it had had before. As yet it could not thwart his creative impulse, which took up the initial urge of Cruikshank's dream and Wordsworth's suggestion, linked them with the revived recollections of his reading, and set him to work tirelessly until the poem was complete. The rich accumulation of reading with which his mind was stored was pressed into service, not with any parade of learning, but so skilfully as to hide itself unsuspected for over a century. "I intended an ode, and it turned to a sonnet," wrote Austin Dobson; "I intended an epic, and it turned to a ballad," Coleridge might have said. But one *Ancient Mariner* is worth a hundred epics in the manner of *The Destiny of Nations*.



## Some Early Nineteenth-Century Letters Hitherto Unpublished

*Edited by* LESLIE N. BROUGHTON

THE Wordsworth Collection of Cornell University, through the continued generosity of Mr. Victor Emanuel, its donor, has recently added several items of importance, including valuable association books from Wordsworth's library, rare works of criticism, and some interesting manuscript letters from Coleridge, Southey, Wordsworth, and others. These letters especially merit attention, because hitherto, so far as the editor is aware, they have not been published, and because their content is of sufficient importance to be of interest to students of the authors and periods concerned. Their transcripts are presented below with fidelity as close as possible to the originals, and with such comments and notes as appear necessary and helpful.

The first group to be considered consists of two letters of Coleridge, widely separated in time and subject-matter, one to his printer, J. M. Gutch, the other to the publishers, Baldwin and Cradock. From the first we may learn much about the complicated evolution of *Biographia Literaria*; from the second, that the bankruptcy in 1819 of Rest Fenner, Coleridge's publisher, was not eventually disastrous for the poet. For the notes to the latter and valuable suggestions in treating other letters appertaining to Coleridge the editor is indebted to his colleague, Professor R. C. Bald. The second group is most numerous in content and should shed not a little light on Coleridge's life at Highgate and his associations with the Gillmans and Thomas Allsop. The first of the four letters of Robert Southey in the third group is in the Wordsworth Collection; the other three are the property of the editor. These letters tell us much about Southey's literary ventures and aspirations, his friendships, his faith in his *A Vision of Judgement*, and his troubles with his publishers, Baldwin and Cradock. The two letters of Wordsworth presented in the last section were acquired by the Collection after

the last volume of Professor de Selincourt's monumental edition of the poet's letters had appeared; otherwise they would have found a place in that work along with five others from Wordsworth to the same correspondent, the Rev. William Jackson. These letters are chatty communications to an old friend about personal and family matters, and conditions at Cambridge and in the Church.

## I

## SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE AND THE PUBLISHERS

1) *Samuel Taylor Coleridge to John Mathew Gutch*

THIS long and interesting letter from Coleridge to his printer rather confirms previous accounts of the growth of *Biographia Literaria* than adds anything strikingly new. The contention <sup>1</sup> that Coleridge was following the example of Wordsworth in publication is strongly supported in the letter by the large reference to the latter's poems. As we know he had been more or less envious of his friend's greater productivity in the *Lyrical Ballads* and *The Prelude*, and it now appears very likely that Wordsworth's publication of two volumes of poetry in 1815 and *The Excursion* in the previous year spurred Coleridge to renewed effort. The long heralded two volumes finally appeared in March, and were quickly followed in May by *The White Doe of Rylstone*. By March 7th Coleridge was writing <sup>2</sup> Cottle about a volume of his scattered and manuscript poems with confidence that he might extend his efforts to two volumes. On March 30th in a letter <sup>3</sup> to Byron the plan for the two volumes of poetry had clearly emerged, also of "A general Preface [which] will be pre-fixed, on the Principles of philosophic and genial criticism relatively to the Fine Arts in general, but especially to Poetry." On May 30th, in a letter <sup>4</sup> to Wordsworth, Coleridge wrote: "I have only to finish a preface, which I shall have done in two, or, at farthest, three days." By July 29th this preface had grown to "an *Autobiographia Literaria*, or Sketches of my literary life and opinions, as far as poetry and poetical criticism are concerned." <sup>5</sup> When the letter before us was written "Biographical Sketches of my Literary Life, Principles, and opinions, chiefly on the Subjects of Poetry and Philos-

<sup>1</sup> George Sampson, *Coleridge: Biographia Literaria, Chapters I-IV, XIV-XXII; Wordsworth: Prefaces and Essays on Poetry, 1800-1815*, pp. 248-60.

<sup>2</sup> *Reminiscences of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Robert Southey*, p. 387.

<sup>3</sup> E. L. Griggs, *Unpublished Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ii, 132-3.

<sup>4</sup> E. H. Coleridge, *Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ii, 650.

<sup>5</sup> *Westminster Review*, April 1870, N.S. xxxvii, 361.

ophy, and the differences at present prevailing concerning both," had become the "main" work to which *Sibylline Leaves* was to be added. The process of evolution was to continue until the *Biographia* filled two volumes and the poems one. Though Coleridge was hard pressed to fill out two volumes of prose, he found it easier than to fill two volumes with poetry of which much was still unwritten.

In the letter to Byron, already referred to, we read: "Long since from many and respectable Quarters I have been urged—and my circumstances now compel me to publish in two volumes all the poems composed by me from the year 1795 to the present Date." In the letter before us, if we believe Coleridge, the outside pressure has completely shifted, for now he writes "In consequence of information received from various Quarters, I concluded, that a detailed publication of my opinions concerning Poetry & Poets, would excite more curiosity and a more immediate Interest than even my Poems" This shifting of popular encouragement, no doubt more imaginary than real, probably was induced by the sight of Wordsworth's volumes with their prefaces old and new, though the favorable reception of his recent lectures at Bristol may have lingered in his mind That Coleridge disagreed with particulars in these prefaces was to be expected, that in self-defence he should wish to duplicate the performance of his friend was only human. At first he hoped to offer two volumes of poems with a suitable preface, but found it easier to shift the emphasis to the Preface He had nothing with which to match *The Excursion*, published in 1814, but he proposed to counter *The White Doe of Rylstone* with *Christabel*, which had long troubled his conscience In his optimism it would be a longer poem than *The White Doe* If he adhered to his original intent to cast the poem in five parts and made the last three of average length with the first two, the finished poem would run to 1965 lines, whereas *The White Doe* contains 55 lines less The fragment of *Christabel*, supported by *Kubla Khan* and *The Pains of Sleep*, which was published in 1816, fell far short in number of lines of the boast in this letter.

In several instances Coleridge says what we might expect. His *magnum opus*, the great Work on the Logos, Divine and Human, is just ahead. *The Friend* he will finish in a fortnight; a tragedy, before Christmas. *The Friend* saw the light in 1818; the Logos and the tragedy never did. In his mind he is tremendously productive, but as usual moneyless and deeply attached to the new-found friends who have aided him. On the contrary we are rather surprised that he says nothing directly of his forthcoming criticism of Wordsworth's views of poetry.



Perhaps he had not yet written it; certainly nothing beyond Chapter XIV.

J. M. Gutch,<sup>6</sup> Esq<sup>re</sup>

Bristol

[Late August or early September, 1815]<sup>7</sup>

My dear Gutch

My accursed Letterphobia, which is always in it's highest paroxysm when I have any thing on my mind or hands, has been the occasion of my troubling my friend, Morgan,<sup>8</sup> to write for me to Bristol, without troubling myself to know exactly what he had written. For I have been constantly deluding myself with the belief, that I should have finished

<sup>6</sup> John Mathew Gutch (1776-1861), editor and author of some distinction, had been a schoolfellow of Coleridge and Lamb at Christ's Hospital. As the proprietor and editor of *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal* he published contributions by Coleridge. The actual printing of *Biographia Literaria* at Gutch's order was done by John Evans & Company. Associated with his name is one of the most important of Coleridge's notebooks (See J. L. Lowes, *The Road to Xanadu*), presented to him by Joseph Henry Green after the poet's death.

<sup>7</sup> The exact date of this letter is difficult to determine, but an approximate one is not far to seek. The only postmark is "Calne 91," but from the contents we infer that the first instalment of the "Biographical Sketches" had been sent to Gutch, apparently the equivalent of three or four chapters. "The rest of the Biography will be sent off by Tuesday Morning's Mail." Coleridge will himself, if he can get a pound or two, "bring the other Manuscripts (i.e. the Poems) on Friday or Saturday Night." Campbell states (*S. T. Coleridge*, 2nd ed., p. 213) that "On August 10 the first instalment of the 'copy' of the *Biographia Literaria* and a second of that of the poems were sent to the printer—or rather to Hood, to whom the MSS. had been secured;" and on the following page adds that "before the end of August, Hood passed on the 'copy' [presumably with Morgan's letter] to Gutch." These statements are not documented unless by "the unprinted correspondence of this period" mentioned in a footnote. From the letter before us it is difficult to corroborate the statement by Campbell that Coleridge had first sent some of the copy of the poems to the printer and then later the first three or four chapters of *Biographia* and a second instalment of copy for the poems. The only possible support for Campbell's statement to be found in the letter is Coleridge's remark: "If I could take a trip to Bristol and return the day but one after, I could bring with me the whole of the MSS. for the two volumes, the Biograph. Sketches and the Poems: = to those of which there will be separate critical or explanatory advertisements." The clause after the sign of equality is not altogether clear, but might mean that only a portion of the poems (i.e., those reserved for special editing) was still in the author's possession. If Campbell's date is right, then we may assume that some time elapsed before Hood passed on the manuscript and Morgan's letter to Gutch and that the letter under consideration was written late in August or early in September, 1815, certainly before the 27th of September, for on that date Coleridge wrote (Griggs, *Unpublished Letters*, ii, 136) John May that he had delivered "compleat to my printer (Mr. Gutch of Bristol) the MSS. of two volumes octavo—the first Biographical sketches . . . the second a collection of poems."

<sup>8</sup> This was John J. Morgan, in whose family Coleridge lived at London, Bristol, and Calne from 1810 until he entered the home of the Gillmans in 1816.

& be able to write myself in the course of a few days.—I must now endeavour therefore to express myself as plainly as possible: but I cannot do this with comfort without previously unloading my heart of the unfeigned feeling of gratitude & affection, that almost oppresses it, toward you, Mr Hood,<sup>9</sup> & Mr Le Breton for your *very* great kindness to me.—

First, then, in consequence of information received from various Quarters, I concluded, that a detailed publication of my opinions concerning Poetry & Poets, would excite more curiosity and a more immediate Interest than even my Poems.—Therefore instead of Poems *and* a Preface I resolved to publish “Biographical Sketches of my *Literary Life*, Principles, and opinions, chiefly on the Subjects of Poetry and Philosophy, and the differences at present prevailing concerning both:—by S. T. COLERIDGE. To which are *added* SIBYLLINE LEAVES, or a Collection of Poems, by the same Author.”—The *Autobiography* I regard as the *main* work: tho’ the Sybilline [*sic*] Leaves will contain every poem, I have written, except the Christabel which is not finished but my *Life* &c will be—both because I think it more generally interesting, and because it will be an important Pioneer to the great Work on the *Logos*, Divine and Human, on which I have set my Heart and hope to ground my ultimate reputation.—As to the Size and Type I care nothing, provided only the Volumes be a handsome octavo, in clear Type, and with 25 or 26 Lines in each page.—The Type and Size of the Preface in the *first* Volume of Wordsworth’s recent *Collection* of his Poems pleased my friends here; but I think it rather too *open* and naked for a *Book*. It has only 22 lines in a page. Perhaps, by putting twenty six or twenty eight this might be obviated. For my feelings shrink from the very semblance of imposture; and were I to gain 500£ by it, I am certain, that I could not consent to have published my CHRISTABEL, which will be a longer Poem than the WHITE DOE of my friend Wordsworth in the form of the White Doe, and in a GUINEA QUARTO!!! Most certainly not in a *first* Edition; and *before* it’s claims to reception had been decided by the Public. *Afterwards*, let the author publish as costly an edition as he thinks, will answer: and let those who are fond of, and can afford, splendid Furniture, buy it, if they like. But I dared not imply—

<sup>9</sup> In April, 1815, William Hood, with other Bristol friends, probably including Josiah Wade and Mr. Le Breton, lent Coleridge £45 plus £27:5:6 due on his life insurance, taking a claim on his MSS. as security. Wade was a witness at Coleridge’s marriage, had helped him start *The Watchman* and paid the debts when it failed. He also contributed to Poole’s pension for Coleridge. Mr. Le Breton was one of the poet’s old schoolfellows.

None but the wealthy shall purchase *my* Poem; and *they* shall pay three times as much as there is any occasion.—

Secondly, as the Biographical Sketches are not a *Preface* or any thing in the Nature of a Preface, but a Work per se: I would fain have it printed in *Chapters*. And here begins my perplexity. Morgan's extreme anxiety and depression of Spirits occasioned me to send off the first part of the work by itself: tho' the whole was written,<sup>1</sup> excepting only the philosophical Part which I at that time meant to comprize in a few Pages. This has now become not only a sizeable Proportion of the whole, not only the most interesting portion to a certain class, but with the exception of four or five Pages of which due warning is given, the most *entertaining* to the general Reader, from the variety both of information and of personal anecdotes. Were I on the spot, I could divide the Part at present in your possession into three or four chapters, with their appropriate Headings and Mottos, in half an hour: or if I could take a trip to Bristol and return the day but one after, I could bring with me the whole of the *MSS.* for the two Volumes, the Biograph. Sketches, and the Poems: = to those of which there will be separate critical or explanatory advertisements, to be printed either closer or in a somewhat smaller Type.—But I am at present literally *moneyless* and tho' Solomon tells us, that Money *Maḱeth wings* for itself to fly away, I am sure, it is the only *Wing-maker* for others.—I am engaged to spend Thursday at *Corsham* House with the Methuens,<sup>2</sup> who will send their carriage for me: and if I can contrive to get them to send me as far as Bath on Friday, I might perhaps manage to reach Bristol either on foot or on the top of the Stage.—

Otherwise, I must entreat you to look over what I have already sent, and to divide it into two or three Chapters, the first headed—

Occasion of the Work. Volume of Juvenile Poems. The discipline of my Understanding at School.—

<sup>1</sup> At this time (Cf. Campbell, *S. T. Coleridge*, 2nd ed., pp. 212–13) Coleridge probably had written to the end of Vol. I, except that he still hoped to fill in the hiatus in which he was to include the derivation of his theory of the imagination from his philosophical principles. He appears also to have written Chap. xiv (later the first Chap. of Vol. II), but not the detailed criticism of Wordsworth's poetry which appeared in Vol. II.

<sup>2</sup> In 1815, while an inmate of Morgan's home at Calne, Coleridge enjoyed a great deal of social intercourse with important families of the vicinity, including that of Paul Methuen, M.P., afterward Lord Methuen of Corsham House. Coleridge was attracted hither by Methuen's famous collection of pictures and the evangelical principles of his son, the Hon. and Rev. Thomas A. Methuen, Rector of All Cannings, who in 1845 contributed some interesting reminiscences of Coleridge to the *Christian Observer*.

## Chapter II.

Are Authors an especially irritable Race? and what Authors? Of Reviewers and Reviews.

## Chapter III.

Neither the Writer's, nor Mr Southey's Publications the true cause or occasion of the charge, that there has risen a new School of Poets.—<sup>3</sup>

This is a mere Hint.—The rest of the Biography will be sent off by Tuesday Morning's Mail. I meant to have dispatched it by tomorrow's with this Letter & [*sic*] but there are, I find, about 30 leaves, in which my friendly Amanuensis has written more incorrectly & with more errors than in all the rest of the work together,—and if I can get a pound or two, I will myself bring the other Manuscripts (i. e. the Poems) on Friday or Saturday Night.—As to the Type, whatever you deem respectable (for I would not have it too small) will please *me*. As to the number of Copies, I must leave it to your judgement and that of my Friends, but as Lord Byron has promised to exert himself for me, & there is certainly a considerable curiosity among the reading World about my *name*, from the multitude that have at different Times attended my Lectures, it is a most melancholy omen for my future success, if there should not be such a *chance* of disposing of a first Edition of a thousand copies, as would co-operate with the consideration of the almost double expence of a second Edition. No book-seller, I ever dealt with, talked of a less Edition than a 1000.—But this I leave entirely to your conjoint opinion. The Question is—what will be the difference of expence between 500 & a 1000, compared with the expence of two Ed. of 500 each? God bless you & S.T.C.

P.S. Pray, give me one Line by return of Post,—as to *this* Work, I leave it all to my Bristol Friends—namely yourself, Mr Hood & Mr Le Breton, to whom with Mr Wade I mean to dedicate it,<sup>4</sup> if you will permit me. In a fortnight I shall finish *the Friend* & then I go on night & day alternately with the Logos & my Tragedy<sup>5</sup> which I expect to bring out before Christmas—if I can be housed & fed in the Interim.

<sup>3</sup> These chapter headings correspond so closely with those eventually in the book as to suggest that Gutch had received only materials for Chaps. I–III

<sup>4</sup> This promise was forgotten: the work appeared without dedication

<sup>5</sup> On March 31, 1815, Byron wrote Coleridge suggesting on the strength of the success of *Remorse* that he write a tragedy for Drury Lane. Through Byron's failure to answer "the most important part of my letter," as Coleridge insisted, or through the latter's usual procrastination, the tragedy was never written.

2) *Samuel Taylor Coleridge to Baldwin and Cradock*Mess<sup>rs</sup>. Baldwin and Cradock Publishers

Pater Noster Row

Friday, 29 June 1832

Grove, Highgate

Dear Sirs

In very truth I owe an apology (I wish, I could offer an *excuse*) to you for my delay in acknowledging the receipt of your friendly note with the inclosed check of a 102*£*.<sup>6</sup> But tell the truth and shame the Devil—tho' at the price of going halves in the shame with this cercoconychous (i.e. tail-horn-hoofed) Majesty!—An almost two years confinement to my bed-room (and for the greater part of the latter half of the time to my Bed) pain alternating with far more intolerable bodily inquietude, and the Languor with the torpor of the organs of motion, which still *dog* and retard my convalescence, have tended to aggravate an old bad habit of mine—viz. a sort of cowardly awe and superstitious reverence for the *Seals*<sup>7</sup> (whether wax or wafer) of my Correspondents' Letters, with the consequent suspension *sine die* of all knowledge of their contents which might perhaps by a very partial judge be referred to a taste for the *Magnificent*, on the strength of the old adage—*Omne ignotum pro magnifico*—but to confess the honest truth was and is a very idle and mischievous Trick: and for which I had not the excuse of Debt, or the anticipation of a dunning Bill. This morning, however, my Conscience got me into a corner, and vowed that there She would keep watch and ward, till I had discharged my debt to her—& accordingly I opened my Nephew's Letter and to my "confusion of face" found your note & check as the inclosure. But be assured, my dear Sirs! that I feel grateful to you for your kind attentions to my interests, & remain with great respect your obliged

S. T. Coleridge

<sup>6</sup> Baldwin and Cradock never published any of Coleridge's writings, so the payment of £102 cannot have been an ordinary publisher's cheque. Baldwin, however, was one of the two assignees of the bankrupt estate of Rest Fenner (*Mawman v. Tegg*, 2 *Russ.* 385), and Fenner, it will be remembered, had published *Biographia Literaria*, *Sibylline Leaves*, the two *Lay Sermons*, and the 1818 edition of *The Friend*. Fenner became bankrupt in May 1819, and Coleridge had lost heavily (Griggs, *Unpublished Letters*, ii, 295). The payment was presumably a final settlement of Coleridge's claims against the bankrupt's estate.

<sup>7</sup> For Coleridge's neglect of his correspondence and his reluctance to open letters, see E. K. Chambers, *Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, pp. 200, 203, 207, 243; also Cottle, *Reminiscences*, 2nd ed., p. 377 n.

## II

## THE HIGHGATE CIRCLE

THE Wordsworth Collection of Cornell University recently acquired a package of letters and miscellaneous items, apparently from a dispersal of the literary remains of Thomas Allsop, an ardent admirer and disciple of Coleridge during the latter's life at Highgate. Although only part of the letters are considered at length in this article, a list of the entire contents of the package should have interest and value. To be explicit it contains three letters by Coleridge, two of them to Allsop, and the other to Sir Humphry Davy introducing Allsop; four from Allsop to Coleridge; one from Mrs. Gillman to Coleridge; five from Mrs. Gillman to Allsop; the fair copy for the printer of Coleridge's *Letter to a Young Lady* (See Allsop, *Letters, Conversations and Recollections*, ii, 86-101); a copy, in a hand unknown to the editor, of a letter by Charles Lamb with some variations from the printed copy (See Lucas, i, 440-2); a large fragment of a letter in Allsop's hand addressed to "My dear Young Lady;" a fragment of manuscript in Coleridge's hand, published by Allsop, *Conversations*, etc., i, 197-9 (See also C. D. Thorpe in *Wordsworth and Coleridge: Studies in Honor of George McLean Harper*, 195-6); galley proof of a letter from Coleridge to J. Britton, February 28, 1819 (See Campbell, *S. T. Coleridge*, 239-40); page 3 from a prospectus of Coleridge's philosophical lectures of 1818, on the bottom of which (as in most of the surviving copies of the prospectus) is written in Coleridge's hand: "The Courses are postponed to the 14<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>, in consequence of the late public Event." On the back of the sheet (originally blank) is a brief note presumably to Allsop in Coleridge's hand:

26 Novemb<sup>r</sup> 1818

Dear Sir

I take the liberty of addressing a prospectus to you. Should it be in your power to recommend another Course among your friends, you will (I need not add) oblige your sincere &c S. T. COLERIDGE.

P.S. I hope you will not forget your promise of an early visit at Highgate, but will take a family dinner with us as soon as your leisure permits. We are seldom out, on any day; but are always at home on Sundays and our dinner Hour [is] from 4 to ½ 4.—

The package also contains a letter from John Chester to Allsop, dated

Redruth, September 28, 1837, enclosing a pencil sketch of Coleridge's cottage at Stowey by Chester's daughter-in-law, and giving an account of the death of Thomas Poole.

The four letters by Coleridge (including the brief note on the prospectus of the lectures), though interesting and valuable, do not necessarily add most to our knowledge, for through a large number of letters from Coleridge to Allsop already published (one by E. H. Coleridge, four by E. L. Griggs, and a large number by Allsop himself) we know very fully the poet's intimacy with his young and enthusiastic admirer. The other side of the picture—what Allsop wrote to Coleridge, what Mrs. Gillman's attitude was to Allsop, and especially the unpleasantness in the relations of Coleridge and the Gillmans—is not so familiar. With only brief editorial comment and notes it is best to let the letters reveal the facts.

1) *Samuel Taylor Coleridge to Thomas Allsop*

T. Allsop, Esq<sup>re</sup>

No. 2 Albany Street Regent's Park

If Mr A. have left Albany St, to be taken to  
Blandford Place, Pall Mall.

Saturday Afternoon,

My dearest Allsop [Highgate, February 9, 1822] <sup>8</sup>

It is not "*my way*" to sit down to a Letter, with no other purpose than to make others uncomfortable by telling them how uncomfortable I am myself.<sup>9</sup> But really I did so far over-rate my fortitude, that I must plead guilty to more pain from *missing* you for such a dreary Saturday-&-Sunday Recurrency, than I ought to have suffered—or for self will manage to edge *in* something, as a sort of noun *adjective* in the ex-cusative <sup>1</sup> case—than I should have felt, if I could have set up against it

<sup>8</sup> Postmark.

<sup>9</sup> We might not guess from the tone of the first part of this letter that it was addressed to one who should be a happy bridegroom. On January 19th Coleridge wrote Allsop that he had received the first news of the latter's marriage (Griggs, *Unpublished Letters*, II, 302). When he wrote the letter under consideration Coleridge apparently had not met the bride, and we may infer that in his marriage, at least, Allsop had not taken his trusted friend into his confidence.

<sup>1</sup> In spite of a somewhat gloomy beginning, the letter through its vocabulary reveals its author in a rather jocular, if not happy frame of mind, and affords an excellent illustration of Coleridge's facility in the use of verbal oddities "Excusative," "Daemon," "personcity," "inquantance," "conquantance," "praeterfluents," and "confluents" make an impressive list in one short letter, and have left their mark on the *New English Dictionary* "Excusative" appears in that work described as "rare" with the first illustra-

the assurance, that you were at ease in mind, body and estate—and that no circumstances had arisen to annoy you. Would to God that your feelings permitted, made it possible for you to unfold—not *yourself*: for that lies expanded before without a wrinkle—but your affairs & troubles, apprehensions and expectations, even as I do or desire to do, to you. But do not, I conjure you, do not mistake me! I do not mean, or think, that you love me less than I love you, or interpret it as the result of any want of confidence in me, intellectual, moral, or prudential. I know, that there are inward withholdings that are as the attendant Daimon or Genius of an Individual, allotted to him together with his personēity, and which will be listened to even tho' their utterances should be at times but a nervous singing in the ear, were it only from remembrance that at other times, & most often they have been Voices of the Heart.—I have blamed myself ever since for not going up when I called at Albany Street. I am sure, I should have managed every thing with Mrs A. & have had her by this time sitting at our fireside here, as an *Inquaintance*—to use poor Hartley's phrase when he was not four years old, and which with acquaintance and conquaintance would go near to comprize all a man's social wardrobe, above the rank of mere *Praetérfluents* and *Confluents*.—

With regard to Derwent, I never had any impression but what is contained in the words—non quod malum, sed quod intempestuum est—the suddenness of the disappointment, and the rush from so many distinct quarters of the complaints & statements, vexed me; but I was & remain far more grieved by his excuses & tone of self-defence.<sup>2</sup> I am busily engaged—besides some letters to Keswick which I have been obliged to write, in answer to a long list of Questions of Mrs Coleridge who has a notable facility in misunderstanding the plainest words. I

tion as late as 1865. Thus Coleridge may claim its coinage. Likewise the first appearance of "Daimon" (1852) recorded is much later than that in this letter. The Dictionary accredits "personēity" to Coleridge and draws four out of six illustrations from his writings, the first from a letter to Allsop dated October 8th, 1822, some months later than the use in this letter. "Inquaintance" and "conquaintance" are also accredited by the Dictionary to Coleridge's inventiveness, with an illustration from *Frazer's Magazine*, 1835, which also affirms that "inquaintance" originated with Hartley. "Confluents" long antedates Coleridge, but "praetérfluents" has not yet found its place in the Dictionary. The letter as a whole is a typical expression of the intimate friendship of Coleridge and Allsop, and also contains the customary allusion to the former's great works ever on the verge of completion.

<sup>2</sup> This reference to Derwent's self-defence indicates that Derwent, who had recently been playing the part of a college dandy, had written defending himself against accusations made by his father in a letter dated January 11th (Griggs, *Unpublished Letters*, II, 298).



expect her and my little Sara at the close of the ensuing Spring<sup>3</sup> for a month or six weeks. The Logic goes on briskly—& my greater work is at least *accelerating* it's pace. Mr Gillman & Mr Green both liked the Maxilian<sup>4</sup> much, & it will improve. But small interruptions in my state of health are not small.—

When shall I see you?—When it can be with propriety, on that very moment read that question as an intreaty of, my dear Friend,

Your with blended  
fraternal & paternal Regard & Love,  
S. T. Coleridge

P. S. That Mrs G. sends her kindest remembrances, it scarce needs a Post-script to say—nor how anxious she & Mr G. are to shew their attachment to you by their respect & sense of Welcoming to your's.

2) *Samuel Taylor Coleridge to Thomas Allsop*

T. Allsop, Esq<sup>re</sup>

Grove, Highgate

My ever dear Allsop

You do not know me if you think that even a week, in a peck of troubles as I have myself been, has passed without earnest most anxious thoughts about *you*.<sup>5</sup> In answer to your's what can I say but that if I knew how to answer, you would have heard long long ago—. For Heaven's sake come up to us—disburthen your whole mind & feelings to us—believe me, my dear friend, and never dearer than now, sad and perplexing as your affairs are,<sup>6</sup> they are not so great an evil, as that in-

<sup>3</sup> The visit of Mrs. Colendge and Sara did not take place according to Campbell (*S. T. Coleridge*, 2nd ed., 252) until Christmas week, although Chambers (*S. T. Coleridge*, 303) wrongly puts it in November (See Allsop, *Letters, Conversations*, etc., II, 151).

<sup>4</sup> *Maxilian* appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine*, January, 1822, and therefore if "it will improve," as Coleridge here remarks, the change must come by the grace of time and rereading.

<sup>5</sup> As is the case in all true friendships, Allsop brought anxiety and solicitude as well as happiness to his friend. What Coleridge meant by "a peck of troubles" is not easy to discover with any degree of certainty, and we may without any intention of levity affirm that for him only a peck of troubles was a moderate affliction. In a way we may guess what was disturbing him. In the latter part of 1826 he was in poor health. At about this time and later he was much concerned over an attempt, which came to naught through the death of friends, to secure him a sinecure. He was also much disturbed on learning of his daughter's love for and probable engagement to her cousin, Henry Nelson Coleridge. He grieved, too, with the Gillmans in their "suffering on poor little Henry's account."

<sup>6</sup> What financial troubles were weighing upon the idealistic mind of Allsop is uncertain. We would not ordinarily select Coleridge as a business man's guide and adviser, but in this letter his advice is that of a philosopher and appears sound. This impas-

capability of plucking your hopes and fears & difficulties out from your own heart and mind and giving them that distance without which we can see nothing with our eyes and nothing as it really is with our minds' eyes.—This has been the occasion of all your sorrows, and if you could once conquer this thoroughly I should see no reason why you should not yet be a prosperous, at least a happy man. Now as to myself, what can I say? Be assured, no self-love will weigh with me an atom in any feasible plan of serving you. I will do any thing but what in your own judgement (if you will but give that judgement even tolerable play, by relieving your oppressed spirit & opening yourself out to us) would be seriously, very seriously injuring myself and the friends who have not only on me but on themselves other peremptory claims in addition to those of friendship, without even a *chance* of benefiting you. Come to us, and you shall yourself be the judge—& I doubt not, that with manly fortitude looking the worst in the face the Result will not be more than with the help & comfort of those, who love you, a man ought to bear. Pray, do not even for a single week longer keep away from us—I had written, from yourself, by mistake—& yet it truly is keeping away from your true self —If you knew what poor Mrs Gillman has been suffering on poor little Henry's account <sup>7</sup> (the Worst is now over, thank God!) you would appreciate the strength of the feeling which in the midst of all her anxieties has kept you prominent in her daily thoughts— Come, & believe me, my dear Allsop,

most earnestly your affectionate Friend

S. T. Coleridge

1 Feby 1827 <sup>8</sup>

sioned letter is probably an amplification of that "probable reference to him [Allsop] early in 1827" mentioned by Chambers (*S T Coleridge*, 317, Griggs, *Unpublished Letters*, II, 402) 'I am at this moment heart sick with fruitless anguish from the ruin of a Man who loved me as a Father, but whom I had in vain sought to defascinate '

<sup>7</sup> In October the Gillmans had been obliged for rather obscure reasons to withdraw their son Henry from Eton and place him in another school

<sup>8</sup> Fortunately this letter is fully dated Had it been otherwise, internal evidence could hardly fix the time beyond a doubt, especially in face of a misleading statement by Chambers (*S T Coleridge*, 317) 'Of Allsop,' he writes, "who fell into financial embarrassment, apparently through speculation, he [Coleridge] seems to have seen little after 1825 There is a probable reference to him early in 1827 The above letter is something more than a probable reference —a most intimate and friendly communication, from which we may infer that the frequent week-end visits by Allsop were not a thing of the past Chambers must have concluded, as did E H Coleridge (*Letters of S T Coleridge*, II, 695), that the intimacy was broken off in 1825, because Allsop published no letters of Coleridge of a later date Why the two letters given above did not find a place in Allsop's book is difficult or impossible to explain. Though he included much, perhaps it was only a selection of what he had

3) *Samuel Taylor Coleridge to Sir Humphry Davy*<sup>9</sup>

Dear Sir Humphrey [*sic*], [1820]

Will you permit an old Friend, who (as you are well aware) knew six & twenty years ago in faith & foresight what all the civilized world now knows by the fact,<sup>1</sup> to ground for the first time a claim on you on the score of youthful intimacy & never intermitted honor & admiration. The Gentleman who will present this letter to you is a very near and dear Friend of mine of whose head, heart & character I have the best possible reason to think with unqualified approbation, his name T Allsop of the house of Harding Allsop & Co. He delivers it, however, as the organ & representative of a company formed and forming for the purpose of mining in Derbyshire. To the best of my knowledge & judgement its prospects are grounded on sound data furnished by a long & intimate knowledge of the local facts. Of one thing I am assured that the expectations of the Gentlemen concerned in it are wholly derived from their confidence in the *Ultimate* Success of the undertaking and in no degree from the hope of getting rid of the shares at a premium previous to its commencement.

What the proposal or request which Mr Allsop may have to submit or prefer to you, he will himself explain.

My office & object are to solicit for him access to you and an attentive hearing

<sup>9</sup> This brief letter to Sir Humphry Davy introducing Allsop is the one referred to in Letter 310 of the *Unpublished Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, II, 263-4, in the sentence, "I now in—or rather *con*-close a letter to Sir Humphry Davy, so written that if it should be necessary to deliver it *to day*, it will, I hope, serve the purpose." The letter throws some light on Allsop's business ventures and indicates, if additional evidence is necessary, the high esteem in which he was held by Coleridge. It appears that Allsop was somewhat in the habit of calling on his friend for letters of introduction, for in the letter in which this one was enclosed he had evidently asked for one to Dr Woolaston, and in another letter printed later in this article (p 64) we learn that he had requested one to Mr Strutt. The manuscript of the letter before us is a copy in Allsop's hand of the original.

<sup>1</sup> Coleridge's opinion of Davy is expressed well by Cottle (*Reminiscences*, 329): "I then remarked, During your stay in London, you doubtless saw a great many of what are called 'the cleverest men,' how do you estimate Davy in comparison with these?" Mr. Coleridge's reply was strong, but expressive. 'Why, Davy could eat them all! There is an energy, an elasticity in his mind, which enables him to seize on, and analyze all questions, pushing them to their legitimate consequences. Every subject in Davy's mind has the principle of vitality. Living thoughts spring up like turf under his feet.' With equal justice, Mr Davy entertained the same exalted opinion of Mr Coleridge."

I scarcely know a favor, that I could ask of you with greater earnestness, or should be more disposed to regard as a proof that you recollect not without kindness, dear Sir Humphry

Grove Highgate	Your Sincere admirer & obliged friend S. T. Coleridge
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4) *Thomas Allsop to Samuel Taylor Coleridge*

Of the four letters from Allsop to Coleridge the first and last are dated and the second and third, for reasons stated later, may be assigned to 1820 and 1825 respectively. In the perusal of these letters one is strongly reminded of Coleridge's description of Allsop's first letter to him—"manly, simple, and correct." The style of the disciple is far less involved than that of the master; his meaning is more clear and concise. He is respectful, grateful, considerate, ironic, practical, and philosophic.

S. T. Coleridge Esqr

J. Gilman Esqr

Highgate

Dear Sir,<sup>2</sup>

I was highly gratified by your letter not only as such, but from the innate & heartfelt pleasure and interest with which I regard every thing having the most remote relation to one to whom I owe much, if not all, the self knowledge I possess, and towards whom I feel all the respect due to intellectual superiority united to perfect and entire purity of intention.

To the calumniators and detractors of the present day, an author of no party is considered fair *game* by both; and I should regret still more than I do, the bitterness of attack and misrepresentation to which Mr Coleridge<sup>3</sup> has been subject, were it not that I owe the honor of his acquaintance to a peculiarly virulent and malignant tirade in a northern work and which I was told by one versed in critical craft was

<sup>2</sup> This letter is a reply to one from Coleridge (See E. H. Coleridge, *Letters*, ii, 696 and Thomas Allsop, *Letters, Conversations, etc.*, i, 3) dated three days earlier, which in turn is a reply to one of a still earlier date by Allsop. In his letter Coleridge complains bitterly of his treatment by the reviewers and of his neglect by Wordsworth. From another letter or note James Gillman publishes (*The Life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, p. 312) as of the same year a very similar complaint.

<sup>3</sup> Though Allsop has known Coleridge for nearly a year he still addresses him formally as "Dear Sir" and in the third person.

drawn up by a brother, but inferior poet,<sup>4</sup> and which by being overcharged effectually defeated its own object. Those who were not already acquainted with the writings of Mr. Coleridge would not it is true be much encouraged to peruse them, from the character there presented; but upon those who have read *The Remorse*, the *Christabel* and that exquisite collection of poetry the *Sybilline leaves*, the infamy of such an attack must as it has done recoil upon its author.

I am very glad that my suggestion has been thought worthy of adoption and I hope to see a numerous and intelligent auditory to the whole course. I cannot conceive any subject of a thousandth part of the importance, but the public, so happily, tho' I fear not judiciously denominated "the Reading Public" are so accustomed to have the utile et dulce administered at one & the same time that the audience how numerous soever will still be select. If an analysis or an abridgement of each lecture were given in the *Morning Chronicle* or *Literary Gazette* it would be of essential service; I recollect being told by a Gentleman connected with the Royal Institution that the abstracts of Davy's lectures in the *Observer* newspaper contributed more than any other circumstance to give them importance at the time. If any such epitome were inserted in that paper,<sup>5</sup> it would have at this moment a decidedly greater influence, as its circulation is so very great in London; and as its columns were open to those of Davy then only emerging from obscurity, they will hardly be refused to one so prominent as Mr Coleridge.

Several of my friends will attend on the first Evg of the course and I doubt not that they will be induced by higher motives than curiosity to attend the course throughout. If I can be in any way useful as an "employee" I shall derive great satisfaction from serving Mr Coleridge in active offices as well as good wishes

With great respect

Your most obedient Servt

T Allsop

London 5 Dec<sup>r</sup> 1818

<sup>4</sup> To whom Allsop here refers we cannot be certain, probably John Wilson, who was accused of writing the unfair review of *Biographia Literaria* in *Blackwood's Magazine* (See Chambers, *S. T. Coleridge*, 285-6).

<sup>5</sup> As in his first note to the poet, Allsop has suggestions for his friend's lectures, this time with the business man's eye for advertising.

5) *Thomas Allsop to Samuel Taylor Coleridge*

S. T. Coleridge Esqre

Highgate

[February 1, 1820] <sup>6</sup>

My dear Sir,

I had purposed to have walked to Highgate yester-morning and with that intention I had delayed answering your kind letter and accompanying gift, but the mournful events of Saturday frustrated that intention.

Permit me therefore to return my most grateful thanks for the trouble [*sic*] you have taken in transcribing your MSS. alterations and additions to my copy of the *Friend*,<sup>7</sup> and which I shall ever hold most sacred.

I shall avail myself of a very early opportunity of walking to Highgate, as I have much to reproach myself with, in this *involuntary* absence. Mr Williams<sup>8</sup> uncertainty (I await an answer, which will not be delayed *more* than a fortnight) Mrs Gillman's illness, and my apparent want of proper feeling in not having sooner returned my grateful acknowledgements of your kind remembrance, have often presented themselves to my recollection, during the throng and confusion of the last few days; which will in some measure I trust plead my excuse for this very hasty apology.

If I do not see or hear from you or Highgate soon I shall certainly intrude myself upon you once again in person; but I indulge a vain hope, that the delightful season which is now approaching and which so strongly invites me into the country, may be an inducement for you to come to London. Every thing seems perfect unmixed confusion in this "locality," and is likely to remain confused for some days or weeks. That excellent, delicate monster, the mob, the self same mob who two short months ago made the air unwholesome with their yells and their outcries at the Regent; hailed his ascension with acclamations, deep

<sup>6</sup> This letter can be precisely dated by the reference to "the mournful events of Saturday," "the ascension," "the reign of sixty years," and by the partial date, Tuesday morning. All these allusions point to the death of George III on Saturday, January 29, 1820, and indicate that the following Tuesday would be February 1. Although Allsop is writing at half-past two on Tuesday morning, he is thinking of the time as still Monday night in the reference to "yester-morning" in the first line of his letter, Sunday being his visiting day at Highgate.

<sup>7</sup> See Allsop, *Letters, Conversations, etc.*, i, 25, for Coleridge's account of the manuscript corrections and additions of Allsop's copy of *The Friend*.

<sup>8</sup> Probably J. B. Williams, a young lawyer living in Highgate and close friend of Coleridge (See Griggs, *Unpublished Letters*, ii, 210, 219).

mouthered and vociferous equally sincere and intelligent as their former revilers. I am perfectly satisfied that whilst all other things differ in degree, from accident, time, place or circumstance, a mob is always, ever the same; consistent in its inconsistency, regular in its regularity. Without saying that "I've wished that I could write a book" I may say that I have often desired leisure and power to expose his Majesty, the People, the Mob, that Nickname for all that is odious and contemptible. May we not hope from Mr Coleridge a fugitive sketch at least or an essay or a notice of a reign of sixty years—

With kindest remembrances to Mr & Mrs Gilman & Mr Williams

I am

Blandford Place

with the greatest respect

½ past 2 Tuesday Morg

T Allsop

6) *Thomas Allsop to Samuel Taylor Coleridge*

S. T. Coleridge Esqre

Highgate

[1825] <sup>9</sup>

My dear & very excellent Friend,

I am about to embark in this little project <sup>1</sup> of machinery for saving &c and tho' what I shall have to do with it will be but little, yet I am desirous to do that well. I will therefore trouble you for a letter to Mr Strutt <sup>2</sup> when I go down, which I anticipate will be in about ten days or a fortnight. This and my thanks to Mr Gillman for his prompt kindness, I put first, not that I think of myself first or at all when I

<sup>9</sup> This letter cannot be dated so exactly as the previous one. The surest indication of time in the letter is in the sentence: "I must make a long day when your book is fairly launched, of which I hear that all copies put up are sold." The book, *Aids to Reflection*, was published in May, 1825. From Allsop's remark we may infer that the book is just appearing. Not much of certainty regarding time can be derived from the reference to Derwent and his movements to and from Plymouth, for they cover two years or more. As late as December 20, 1825, his father was still disturbed about his son's faith. "But in what period of his Caterpillarage he at present is, he has, as aforesaid, not afforded the means of ascertaining or even conjecturing" (Griggs, *Unpublished Letters*, II, 363). At the time Derwent was at Buckfastleigh in Devonshire. All of this uncertainty on Coleridge's part is apparently over by January 4, 1826, when he is able to write his son about "the comfort and gladness which your determination to prepare yourself in good earnest for Orders has given me" (Griggs, *Unpublished Letters*, II, 366).

<sup>1</sup> "This little project" may be the one mentioned by Allsop in commenting on Coleridge's letter to him, March 20, 1825 (*Letters, Conversations*, etc., II, 180). If it was, it apparently failed in his business.

<sup>2</sup> Probably William Strutt (1756-1830) or his brother Joseph (1765-1844), sons of Jedediah Strutt. They and their sister, Elizabeth Evans of Darley Hall, had been long acquainted with Coleridge and were natives of Derbyshire, the county in which Allsop was born. See Coleridge, *Letters*, I, 215-16 and 367.

contemplate you present or absent, but that I may at once escape from all temporary matters. I saw Derwent<sup>3</sup> off on Monday and was exceedingly glad to find him in a temper and frame of mind far more genial than I had hoped, and from this I drew an augury of good omen. I feel deeply interested for Derwent, not indeed for what seems unworthy of the son of such a father, but neither expecting or hoping to find vast power of mind, I think I see those foibles & those peculiarities *only*, which are the usual, I had almost said necessary, concomitants of a mind more than ordinarily susceptible of pleasurable emotions, but too conscious of no ordinary advantages, and impressed with a conviction of great general superiority.

Then my dearest friend, may not his long stay in the North, have produced something approaching to imperfect sympathy with yourself at least, if not with your views & opinions & may not this be the source of his somewhat unfortunate conduct. I should like to see his defence or rather his apology made, for much as I regret somethings in Derwent, there is also much to admire and love. There is a degree of vanity & what to me is still more unpleasant, a want of permanent & deep feeling, at least so I have sometimes imagined, tho' to myself, he is always the same. But these are only superficial blemishes, which intercourse with the society of such a place as Plymouth will tend materially to eradicate. I have long wished to say this, but have been deterred by the consciousness that all I can say has already a place in your mind, and because I feared to defend his imperfect sympathy with you, lest I should seem to consider that circumstance as of little moment.

Not that such a thought could for an instant enter your mind, but I feelingly know that pain may be conveyed by expressions which have an unkind appearance, tho' it is at the same time certainly known that kindly feelings have prompted the expressions.—I become daily more sensible of pain in the inner mind, a sort of diseased exclusive feeling which has gained complete dominion over my whole man; I begin to feel a dislike to all new society & to all new relations and I can hardly frame any shape of mind in which I would take the trouble to sympathize or associate with those much younger than myself; but tho I can not look upon this other than a weakness, yet I am forced to acknowledge that it is almost a sure test of a good man who is at the same time [?] <sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Allsop shows a commendable understanding of Derwent, which was later justified, and this letter and the following must have brought cheer to Coleridge, perturbed as he was about his son's faith.

<sup>4</sup> A hole in the manuscript.



man. But these are fantasay yet having a reality of their own, and I yet hope will furnish by a happy alchemy the seed of a more assured composure should events prove auspicious. In the old world it had been easy to have adopted the Stoic philosophy; in our English commercial world, I much question whether the thing be possible, even were it desirable any where or in any time. I must make a long day when your book is fairly launched, of which I hear that all the copies put up, are sold. May I enquire whether the announcement is exactly what you wish it to be, particularly whether you did not propose to use interposed or interspersed for interpolated.<sup>5</sup> Lamb thinks that the work should be announced as an original one—but this is a piece of unasked impertinence, prompted however by my devotion to your better than best, interests. May I hope to see you in Pall Mall the first possible opportunity. Ever yours most affectionately. I shall write soon to dear Mr Gillman.

570156

T Allsop

7) *Thomas Allsop to Samuel Taylor Coleridge*

The last of the four letters from Allsop to Coleridge shows the writer's increasing difficulty in writing, and his growing solicitude for the feelings of his honored friend. In fact, the four salutations of these letters mark quite accurately the evolution of Allsop's regard for his correspondent: "Dear Sir," "My dear Sir," "My dear and very excellent Friend," "My dear & revered friend." In brief the letter indicates no cheerful frame of mind in the writer; that his business ventures are becoming more hazardous; and that Coleridge still needs assurance of Derwent's merits.

S. T. Coleridge, Esq<sup>r</sup>

Plains of Waterloo, Ramsgate.

Tuesday 2 Nov 1825

My dear & revered friend,

I have written several letters to you and torn them up, under the influence of uncertainty. Some have been too sanguine others too disponding [*sic*] for you to see or for one who has been honored by your society to write. yet in some measure I have now arrived at that state of quiet uncertainty that being (I hope) prepared for & expecting the

<sup>5</sup> In the "Advertisement" of the first edition of *Aids to Reflection* Coleridge wrote "Hence the term, *Editor*, subscribed to the notes, and prefixed alone or conjointly to the Aphorisms, accordingly as the Passage was written entirely by myself, or only modified and (*avowedly*) interpolated."

worst, I can hardly be said to be disappointed. My Uncle one of those worldly men who have no other motive equal in influence to that of getting or keeping money has placed us all in a *quandary* and if he perseveres in his extraordinary conduct will from timidity & irresolution cause us to sacrifice all the property we have in trade, and this from fear of loss, altho any possible loss would not exceed  $\frac{1}{10}$  of what he is desirous we should make

But enough of this and even this is too much If after all we can make any arrangements, it is PROBABLE we may make the business more productive than before, but this uncertainty is injurious. I have seen Derwent in his passage thro' London to Cambridge and have been much interested by his adventure in Shrewsbury A Lawyer in good practice to whom he was utterly unknown, has been so much delighted and pleased by his company & conduct that he offered him every assistance should he go to the bar & to pay the fine or sum for entrance (200£ I believe) Indeed once placed Derwent in any pursuit neglect of which would include degradation I have no doubt of his ultimate success[.] On this head I have much to say, much that will I hope be grateful to you.

Kindest regards to Mrs Gillman and believe me ever my dear Sir,  
Your affectionate friend

Thos Allsop

P S. When returned from the sea, will you honor us with a weeks sojourn while the house & furniture are adjusting. Should your stay be protracted beyond Sunday week, I will if agreeable spend a day or two at Ramsgate

8) *Anne Gillman to Samuel Taylor Coleridge*

S. T. Coleridge Esq<sup>e</sup>

April 7th, A.M.<sup>6</sup>

I was in hopes I should hear from our kind friend Mr A how you were this morning, but I have not I cannot tell you how I reproach

<sup>6</sup> This letter from Mrs Gillman to Coleridge was written Wednesday, April 7, 1824, and apparently was a personal note sent by a messenger, for it bears no evidence of passing through the mail Near the end of March that year Coleridge left the Gillmans and went to live with the Allsops On the event Campbell remarks (*S T Coleridge*, 2nd ed., 255): "The cause of the temporary rupture is unknown to me, but there is some reason for supposing it to have been connected with the discovery that Coleridge was not strictly confining his consumption of laudanum to the quantities prescribed and supplied by Mr Gillman" The publication of his letters to the chemist, Mr Dunn (Griggs, *Unpublished Letters*, II, 328-31), leaves no doubt that Coleridge was breaking

myself, for now I begin to fear your leaving us may have arisen from my cool behavior yet indeed I feel for you as *formerly*, and know not how to bear up against the fear even of losing you. If you have been in despair take courage, a *little* time, patience, and *prudence* will yet set all to rights, and we may once more all three be happy. Gillman thinks you want to leave us. Pray come to me here if you do not judge wrong. Mr G w<sup>d</sup> not disapprove it I am sure. Only convince him that you love him and will not be so inconsiderate again, and all will yet be well. I will learn a lesson and not suffer my own impatience at your faults for so I call them to put me so much out. Do pray let Mr A write if you cannot. Tell me all about your health, your feelings &c. I scarcely know how to appear tranquil and wish like you I could abstract myself from my *heartfelt* pain even for a short time. I shall call on you as I return home but it will be before twelve, Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday. I do reproach myself bitterly, but as yet have said little to Mr G— for as far as he is concerned you have been sadly in fault, and it is best perhaps to let just anger pass by a little. He is likewise

rules in his use of the drug. Chambers lightly passes up the event in three lines (*S T Coleridge* 308). Another [purchase of opium] in 1824 is probably connected with a visit to Allsop, which was meant to be of two days, but from which Coleridge had to be retrieved by Gillman, when it had already extended to ten."

The letter before us indicates that Campbell was right in calling the event a "temporary rupture" instead of a visit—meant to be of two days, and that Coleridge was retrieved (if that is the right word) by Mrs. Gillman and not by her husband, to whom in his anger she has said little as yet. Feelings apparently were intense on both sides. Coleridge is termed inconsiderate, sadly at fault, and desirous of leaving his hosts. Mrs. Gillman reproaches herself for her cool behavior, and affirms that her husband has just anger and is much hurt. The letter as a whole is a disorderly outburst of emotion rather than a calm array of reason. There is no evidence of the place from which Mrs. Gillman is writing and at which she solicits a meeting, or of what fault Coleridge is guilty. The letter apparently produced instant results, for on the next day, April 8th, Coleridge is back at Highgate writing the Allsops, whom he has quitted in such haste that he left behind Wordsworth's Translation of Virgil (Allsop, *Letters Conversations*, etc., II, 166). Mrs. Gillman, who is writing on Wednesday, must have been surprised at the sudden return of Coleridge, for in her letter she speaks of calling on him on Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday, apparently the following week. Though he may have left in anger, Coleridge could not fail to be moved and appeased by this earnest and friendly appeal—his longing for sympathy was met. For some reason not obvious, Mrs. Watson speaks of this event (Lucy E. Watson, *Coleridge at Highgate* 35, 89), unless she had another similar one in mind, as taking place in September.

A specimen of Allsop's vague and evasive comment on Coleridge's letters is attached to that of April 8th addressed to the Allsops and evidently intended to shield Coleridge: "This letter was written after a sojourn of about ten days in London, respecting which I have preserved the correspondence, but which, as it is of interest chiefly to myself, would be out of place here" (*Letters, Conversations*, etc., II, 168).

much hurt about your Book <sup>7</sup> not being out, and this appears reasonable[.] But still I do believe that things may yet be settled—if you don't come could Mr A come any time in the evening to me here. My ignorance & suspense are very painful. G loves you so much, I am sure if things are well arranged matters may be adjusted. And I feel confident that the happiness perhaps well doing of all *three* is concerned, so do not let us two suffer pride or temper to interfere in such a serious affair where there exists so much love. I should not write this but that I am persuaded of your attachment being unaltered. If you write to H— send it me first, if by a messenger. But I wish above all things to see you. Yours as ever

A G—

9-13) *Anne Gillman to Thomas Allsop*

The first three of the five letters or notes from Mrs. Gillman to Allsop may all be assigned to 1820, in the order below, by their reference to Hartley's affairs. The fourth is postmarked 1821. The fifth is undated, but probably belongs to the same period. These letters stress Coleridge's poor health in 1820 and his intense suffering from Hartley's disgrace in losing his Probationary Fellowship in Oriel in May, 1820 (See Chambers, *S. T. Coleridge*, 504-5). "Yesterday he was convulsed with agony;" "the affair of Hartley will I fear never be overcome."

The five letters prove in a convincing manner that Coleridge's frequent guest was no added burden in the Gillman home, as were some of Hartley's uninvited and unexpected guests, but an inmate of the heart, as welcome as the poet himself. Mrs. Gillman regarded Allsop with the "warmest affections," "with a feeling approaching the maternal, or at the least to that of an elder sister." For his health, his business success, his happiness, and his company she was ever solicitous. Thus was received and esteemed at Highgate the man who loved Coleridge as a father and whom Coleridge loved as a son.

This group of letters portraying the less known portion of the Highgate circle will, we trust, add to our knowledge of that singular and sentimental relationship, beset with difficulties, sorrows and heartaches, but preserved by strong ties of love and friendship.

<sup>7</sup> Coleridge's book about which Mr. Gillman is hurt because it is not out was the selections from the works of Archbishop Leighton (E. H. Coleridge, *Letters*, ii, 734), eventually entitled *Aids to Reflection*, still more than a year from completion.

9) *Anne Gillman to Thomas Allsop*

Thos Allsop Esqre,

Blandford Place

My dear Sir /

I am grieved at your account of yourself. Pray do stay with your kind friends at Clapham until you are *much* better. Do write to us about Tuesday or Wednesday for we shall be most anxious to learn how you are. I am shocked at having been so thoughtless as to communicate to you the subject of the note—but in the feeling for the anguish of our dear friend, I thought of you as of another Son of his, one whom he loves and cherishes as his own—& forgetting your state of health, saw only the agony of the Father. Take care of yourself my dear Mr Allsop for the sake of Mr C——, for all *our* sakes, & above all for the sake of those Relatives to whom you must be so very dear. Derwent is gone to Oxford to bring back his Brother here, & Mr C will then see what can be done to re-instate him. He is as well as we can expect him to be. Yesterday he was convulsed with agony, tho' at first he was calm. In the evening he was tranquil, as he is today tho' of course remains deeply affected. His God & his Books are his refuge, & a sure help in time of trouble. He is now going to walk with me, and I think we shall succeed in diverting his mind from this sad subject, until he must of *necessity* go into it fully. I will write to you in the course of the week, but I hope to hear from you first, but do not notice this circumstance. Let me intreat you not to return to business too soon. A fortnight's perfect ease might do every thing for your health. Perhaps you may like to write to Mr G about yourself, or if you should find it necessary he could possibly come over to you as he is rather less engaged, but Mr C—— who is at this moment come into the Room says he will write to you himself— We shall think and talk of you daily, indeed we have already long done so, and I would fain persuade *you* my dear Mr Allsop to regard me as an elder Sister, being with sentiments of the highest esteem

Your affect<sup>d</sup> Friend

Highgate

A G——

Saturday morning

You will excuse this paper I hope. I took it by mistake.

..

10) *Anne Gillman to Thomas Allsop*

Dear Mr Allsop

I should have written before, but I waited in the hope of having better intelligence for you— I wrote to Mrs M but the remainder of Hart-

ley's things were sent up on the Monday Night— There is now a plan in agitation for him, which we will enter into on Sunday when we depend on seeing you. perhaps on Saturday night you would come—let me know if you intend to bring your Sister for a night or two. I shall expect a longer visit after—tho' I don't like to *tease* you into it.

Derwent has been & you would have had a visit from him but he was prevented by a particular circumstance which I will explain I am sorry to say Mr C—— has had his feelings much wounded by his Brother George not having kept his engagement, & I was obliged to tell him about Hartley You have not sent for any more medicine I wish much to know how you are I write in gt haste but always in Sisterly love and affection

A G——

*Wednesday*

I have this moment received your kind letter Come if you can on Sunday—or Saturday[ ] You are a great comfort to us *all*. Why did you not write me the overflowings of your feelings[ ] To *me* they are not only interesting but sacred God protect & keep you my dear young friend.

11) *Anne Gillman to Thomas Allsop*

Mr Allsop

The sight of your hand writing, my dear Mr Allsop, is ever welcomed by us all. The moment a letter from you is *announced*, I begin already to anticipate the pleasure, I never fail to receive, from the free communication of your sentiments and feelings And to be frank, I must acknowledge, that I always beg permission to hear parts of your letters; though, I hope I feel too sensibly, the sacredness of a Letter to a friend, to wish to encroach on the indulgence —

Your last, to myself, has gratified me indeed, to think of us, as at no *immeasurable* distance from your Parents, of our little Dwelling, as of a Home; this I feel, and feel deeply—and it must give to all here a new delight & interest in the pleasure we have long received from your visits. Believe me you have hitherto rather left us to regret your not talking or writing of *yourself* enough, than given us cause to complain of tediousness in this respect. For myself, it is with a feeling approaching the maternal, or at the least to that of an elder Sister, with which I think of you, and that I do so daily you will now readily believe. You will be rejoiced to hear that Mr C—— has made an arrangement with Mr Montague about Hartley, for the present at least. Pray do not bring

the Sketch Book, as I have it here already. How ungrateful you will think me, I might at least thank you for your kind intention— Mr Coleridge is, I grieve to say, very poorly; he has not as heretofore rallied—the affair of Hartley will I fear never be overcome. My boys desire their kindest love. I will secure you a bed, pray come early if you can conveniently, both the gentlemen being anxious to see you, as well as dear Mr Allsop

Your affectionate Friend  
Anne Gillman

Monday

12) *Anne Gillman to Thomas Allsop*

Mr Allsop Blandford Place Pall Mall

Your letter, my dear young friend, was *most welcome*, for neither to see nor hear from you is a deprivation I do not bear well, and indeed it was long that you seemed lost to us—not that “my Faith in you had given way”— This can surely never be— I should have written to you in Derbyshire,<sup>8</sup> but I scarcely knew what would be best. I hoped that the painful feelings with which you left London were, for a time at least, dormant or soothed by the love and affection of those dear friends by whom you were surrounded, and this hope made me unwilling to run the risk of recalling your attention thitherwards. Mr C—— and I have talked of you repeatedly[.] How often we have been with you in thought it would be difficult to say. You have, next to his and my children, all our warmest affections[.] You are, as it were the Son of our choice, and certainly much more resembling our dear valued friend, than his own sons, not that I would disparage them. I am most anxious, so we *all* are, to see you; I have, I think prepared my mind for whatever may happen but to lose sight of you— Let no misfortunes of any kind, my dear Mr Allsop EVER induce you to leave us in ignorance of your plans, or deprive us of the *happiness* of your Society when we can have it. Besides I do feel that in Mr C—— you will always find a good adviser when you *chuse* to or *can* put him in possession of all necessary circumstances— I hope to see you on Saturday evening or Sunday early [.] I am angry at my own selfishness for being so pleased at the thought of your returning among us. I shall tell you all that has passed

<sup>8</sup> Derbyshire was Allsop's native county in which Harding, Allsop & Co. engaged in mining operations. (See Coleridge's letter to Sir Humphry Davy, p. 60. Cf. also Coleridge's letter to Allsop, *Letters, Conversations, etc.*, ii, 22-5.)

when we next meet [.] In the mean time accept of and believe all you wish from your Friends here—

Highgate

A G

Sept 12 [1821]

13) *Anne Gillman to Thomas Allsop*

My dear Mr Allsop

I thank you for sending the blond but I was obliged to get some before it arrived. I am very sorry to have kept it, but Affwood [?] forgot to call for it yesterday.

We were *very* much disappointed at not seeing you on Sunday tho' we would not have prevented you from giving your company to a friend to whom it must have been so valuable, at such a time. I always feel disposed to be a little fretful when I have been counting, perhaps all the week before, on seeing you on the Sunday and am disappointed—nevertheless I would not have you neglect a duty, let me say a *higher duty*, for worlds.

Mr C—— is very poorly but I trust you will find him better on Sunday, for I may hope to see you on that day surely. Henpen has kept his bed ten days but is up again.

Your truly attached friend

Wednesday—

A G

I will choose some cloth when I come to Blandford Place <sup>9</sup>—perhaps on Friday. Do ask the price of a handsome plume of black feathers to put in a cottage bonnet— You see I make use of your services in all ways—farewel— All here send you love.

III

FOUR LETTERS BY ROBERT SOUTHEY

In this section are included four letters by Robert Southey, widely separated in time, all dated except the third, and addressed to well-known friends. The first two, on account of their greater length and importance of content, prompt more comment than the last two, but all convey some interesting information regarding Southey's friends, literary projects, and business affairs.

<sup>9</sup> This letter gives a hint as to the nature of the London business of Harding, Allsop & Company.



1) *Robert Southey to John May*<sup>1</sup>

To John May Esq

[Postmarked Keswick, July 1, 1809]

Richmond

Surrey

My dear friend

Your direction has been duly transmitted to the publisher of the *Friend*, & I wish it were in my power to add that you may expect to receive it regularly. The third number has not appeared at the stated time,—indeed it was a great vexation both to myself & Wordsworth<sup>2</sup> that the first ever came out. It had been so long delayed, & we were both so certainly assured that Coleridge cannot possibly carry it on, that our earnest wish was he might never begin it. How he can have deceived himself into the supposition that he could perform a weekly engagement to the public, or how he can excuse to himself the pain which he is occasioning to all those who are interested about him, is as inexplicable as the strange disease, whether of body or mind, which actually incapacitates him from doing any thing, the moment it becomes his duty to do it. I have lately had some serious talk, or rather

<sup>1</sup> Southey met John May in Lisbon and formed with him a lifelong friendship. May was godfather to Southey's daughter Edith, and survived Southey to become the close friend of his son Cuthbert. In a letter to C. W. W. Wynn, Southey summed up his high esteem of May in one terse and expressive sentence. "He is one of the best men I have ever known" (*Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey*, ed. by J. W. Warton, II, 35). Many letters from Southey to May have been published.

<sup>2</sup> The pessimistic view here expressed regarding Coleridge and *The Friend* is in accord with that held by Wordsworth, who on May 31, 1809, wrote Daniel Stuart as follows: "Of the *Friend* and Coleridge I hear nothing, and am sorry to say I hope nothing. It is I think too clear that Coleridge is not sufficiently master of his own efforts to execute anything which requires a regular course of application to one object" (*The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth; the Middle Years*, ed. by E. de Selincourt, I, 319). On the same date or one day later he expressed himself even more strongly to Thomas Poole: "As one of Coleridge's nearest and dearest Friends, you should take into most serious consideration his condition, above all with reference to his children. I give it to you as my deliberate opinion, formed upon proofs which have been strengthening for years, that he neither will nor can execute any thing of important benefit either to himself his family or mankind. Neither his talents nor his genius, mighty as they are, nor his vast information will avail him anything; they are all frustrated by a derangement in his intellectual and moral constitution. In fact he has no voluntary power of mind whatsoever, nor is he capable of acting under any *constraint* of duty or moral obligation. Do not suppose that I mean to say from this that *The Friend* may not appear—it may—but it cannot go on for any length of time. I am *sure* it cannot" (*ibid.*, I, 321). Coleridge, however, did better with *The Friend* than Southey and Wordsworth anticipated, for after making its first appearance on June 1, 1809, with more or less irregularity it struggled on through twenty-seven numbers and finally came to an end March 15, 1810. As suggested in this letter, friends eventually contributed funds for the education of Coleridge's sons.

consultation with Wordsworth, respecting the hopeless way in which he is going on, & the consequences to his family. The result was that as soon as the Friend shall be given up we must interfere, & arrange some plan respecting the education of the boys. Whenever things come to this crisis it will be proper to apply to George Coleridge, & before any thing of the kind is done I will write fully to you, for your opinion upon the subject.

There is little of mine in the last Annual.<sup>3</sup> Articles 8, 9 of Chapter 1. [—] 8, 9, Chapt. 5.—7, 13 Chapt 6.—1, 3, Ch. 11.—2, 3 C. 12.—33 Ch. 7, are all, & certainly there is nothing good enough in these to make the volume worth purchasing. I shall do no more for it.<sup>4</sup> As long as the Quarterly does not drive me away by any intemperance in its politics I shall continue to write for it,—till the Rhadamanthus<sup>5</sup> be established,—of this I have heard nothing farther, but the delay is wholly owing to Scotts long tarriance in London. In the second Quarterly there is only one article<sup>6</sup> of mine,—which if you have seen you will have of course have [*sic*] recognized. I am sorry that Robert Walpole ventured to attack Leckie,<sup>7</sup> & thereby to provoke Leckie's letter in reply. It is true that Let-

<sup>3</sup> Southey's reference to his articles "in the last Annual" is, of course, to *The Annual Review and History of Literature*, to which he was one of the most prolific contributors. "That said 'Annual Review,'" he wrote, "is of very unequal merit. In my conscience, if William Taylor and I were to forsake it, Mr. Longman might as well think of living without his liver and lungs, as of keeping his Review alive without us" (*Selections from the Letters*, i, 298).

<sup>4</sup> In this statement Southey wrote more truly than he knew, for the periodical came to a sudden end a little over a month later (*Selections from the Letters*, ii, 155). To *The Quarterly Review* he continued to contribute faithfully for nearly thirty years.

<sup>5</sup> The "Rhadamanthus," or Judge of the Dead, was a prospective literary review which never materialized. In a letter to Walter Scott (*Selections from the Letters*, ii, 139-40) Southey had suggested a "review of old books, that is, of any books, except such as were in the province of contemporary criticism." Scott talked the plan over with Ballantyne, the bookseller and brother of the printer, who in turn, full of enthusiasm for the project, paid a visit to Southey. They hoped for aid from William Taylor, John Rickman, Sharon Turner, Lamb, and Coleridge. The plan, however, came to naught because of discouragement by Taylor. "I have started the topic," he wrote, "to many literary friends; all agree in one sentiment, that it will not succeed" (*A Memoir of the Life and Writings of the Late William Taylor of Norwich*, ed. by J. W. Robberds, ii, 277-8, 280). Southey was diverted from the project by undertaking at about the same time the historical part of Ballantyne's *Edinburgh Annual Register* (*ibid.*, ii, 282).

<sup>6</sup> In the number for May, 1809, pp. 268-92, appears Art. III, *Extractos em Portuguez e em Ingles; com as Palavras Portuguezas propriamente accentuadas, para facilitar o Estudo d'aquella Lingoa*. 12mo, pp. 324. London, Wingrave, 1808.

<sup>7</sup> In No. II of the *Quarterly* the Rev. Robert Walpole (1781-1856) made a slashing attack on Leckie in his review, Art. XIV, of *An Historical Survey of the Foreign Affairs of Great Britain with a view to explain the Causes of the Disasters of the late and present Wars*, by Gould Francis Leckie, Esq., London, 1808. A single remark well illustrates

ter will not circulate so extensively as the review, but where it circulates it will do him serious injury;—for that Leckie's statements are true to the very letter I have known, long before his book was published from the testimony of Coleridge,—who was necessarily from his official situation at Malta, intimately acquainted with the politics of Sicily. I myself object to the whole tendency of Reviews,—the only way of lessening the evil which they do is to write for them with scrupulous conscientiousness, with a disposition to befriend the author in question rather than to injure him, above all things bearing in mind how highly probable it is that the man who writes a book upon any given subject, must be better acquainted with that subject than he who takes up the book as one of the chance texts of criticism. Latterly I hope I have done this,—and whenever I have not I have repented of it, & do still repent.<sup>8</sup> In the third Quarterly<sup>9</sup> you will see some 'American Annals'<sup>1</sup> which went [?] from hence, & probably one more article, but whether it will be upon the Mission to the South Sea, or *Ld Valentias Travels*, I do not know.

You ask me respecting Burnett.<sup>2</sup> I have heard nothing from him for two years,—for which there could be two reasons,—that he owes me

the severity of the attack: "Mr. Leckie is a system-monger, and, like all of the profession, a wholesale dealer in decrying whatever he finds established." Leckie stoutly defended himself in a pamphlet entitled: *A Letter to the Rev. R. Walpole, in answer to his criticism on the State of Sicily* (16 pages, 8vo; E. Lloyd, London, 1809).

<sup>8</sup> Southey's comments on his method of reviewing are surprisingly contrary to the general practice of the time, especially in the bloodthirsty Scottish periodicals. In a letter to G. C. Bedford, Nov. 9, 1808, he elaborates: "I believe myself to be a good reviewer in my own way, which is that of giving a succinct account of the contents of the book before me, extracting its essence, bringing my own knowledge to bear upon the subject, and, where occasion serves, seasoning it with those opinions which in some degree leaven all my thoughts, words, and actions. . . . Voyages and travels I review better than anything else, being well read in that branch of literature; better, indeed, than most men. Biography and history are within my reach; upon any of these topics I will do my best" (*The Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey*, ed. by the Rev. Charles Cuthbert Southey, iii, 183-5).

<sup>9</sup> In No. III of the *Quarterly* he had two articles: II, *Transactions of the Missionary Society in the South Sea Islands*; and V, a review of *Voyages and Travels to India, Ceylon, the Red Sea, Abyssinia and Egypt, in the years 1802, 1803, 1804, 1805, and 1806*. By George Viscount Valentia (3 vols., 4to, pp. 1522. London, Miller, 1809).

<sup>1</sup> Southey's review of *American Annals* by Abiel Holmes appeared in No. IV (November) of the *Quarterly*.

<sup>2</sup> Southey's reference to George Burnett, one of the Pantisocrats, is not flattering. This man of varied fortunes, who, when Pantisocracy was in bud, had unsuccessfully sought the hand of Martha Fricker, Mrs. Southey's sister, returned from Poland in 1805, in love with a Polish princess, and died in poverty in a workhouse hospital in 1811. (See also M. Ray Adams, *Two Minor Disciples of Pantisocracy*, E. L. H., Dec., 1938, v, 285-301.)

five & twenty pounds,—& that he knows I greatly disapprove his conduct. I have heard however that he is far gone in consumption, & in all probability the next news will be of his death. How he has been living I know not, nor where he now is,—but from the time when he made that application to you, (which made as it was so unwarrantably I ought not to have afterwards in any manner sanctioned) he has gone on worse & worse, being completely corrupted himself by picking up French morality at second hand in Poland.

I have not seen Wm Taylors articles in the Critical.<sup>3</sup> He hates the Church of England just as a dissen[ter] ought to have hated it in Charles the Seconds time, & it is surprising to see the absurdities to which that hatred will sometimes lead him. Professor Paulus's opinions I know,—they will do little harm & little good in England. Socinianism exists in a perpetual state of atrophy here,—& this system which has even less of vitality than Socinianism will not be able to exist at all,—at least not beyond a few insulated individuals. I do not think he much under-rates the Quarterly,<sup>4</sup> but he over-dislikes it. He loves opposition, & if it gets round to be an opposition review then he will fall in liking with it. This I think it will do if the struggle in the Cabinet should end in Canning's<sup>5</sup> overthrow.

Have you seen Wordsworths pamphlet? <sup>6</sup> Perhaps you could learn

<sup>3</sup> This reference to William Taylor's article in *The Critical Review* on Professor Paulus's opinions is in itself clear. Taylor, however, was not quite pleased with the way in which the article had been edited. "My analysis," he wrote Southey, "of Paulus's 'Commentary on the New Testament' has made its appearance in the Critical Review. The editor, Robert Fellowes, has made two interpolations,—the second and concluding paragraphs,—which displease me. He has made one suppression which I regret,—an attempt to prove, from the first and second chapters of Luke, that Zacharius, who wrote these chapters, meant to hold himself out as the father of Jesus Christ, as well as of John the Baptist. The Jewish idea of being conceived of the Holy Ghost did not exclude the idea of human parentage: the rabbinical commentator on Genesis explains this" (*A Memoir of the Life and Writings of the Late William Taylor*, II, 281–2. See also *ibid.*, 306–12, for fuller discussion).

<sup>4</sup> As Southey remarks, Taylor did not like *The Quarterly Review* and had bluntly assured his friend that it was "not good for much" (*A Memoir of the Life and Writings of the Late William Taylor*, II, 279). In 1812 that periodical made overtures to Taylor for his support, which he refused because he did not approve its political and religious creeds. He continued, however, a most prolific contributor to the *Monthly Review* and *The Monthly Magazine*.

<sup>5</sup> "Canning's overthrow" was brought about in September by his rash duel with Castle-reegh and the formation of a new ministry. Canning had recently exerted himself to obtain a lucrative position for Southey, or at least one that would enable him to live in comfort.

<sup>6</sup> Southey's reference to Wordsworth's pamphlet on the Convention of Cintra, placing the blame for the obscurity of that work on DeQuincey's punctuation, demands brief consideration. On July 30th of the same year, in a letter to Walter Scott, he again blamed

for me by means of Mr Burn, whether the Portuguese Ambassador received the copy which was directed to be sent to him. This pamphlet has been obscure in some places by the way in which his friend DeQuincey has punctuated it,—but I am sure you will fully enter into its spirit & philosophy.

My letter is nearly at its close, & I have not yet told you of my visit to Durham.<sup>7</sup> I past a week with Harry & my new sister. Concerning her state of health he ought to know best,—but the sound of her cough, & still more the way she has of occasionally groaning when she breathes made me at times very melancholy, & would have made me unhappy had I been her husband. In all other points of view he seems to have chosen well,—yet this is the most important of all. I saw some Ladies at Durham who knew you—their names I think are the same as that French pie<sup>8</sup> which I do not know how to spell.—Remember us to Mrs May & believe me

yours very affectionately

Robert Southey.

DeQuincey for the same fault, but also complained of Wordsworth's long and involved sentences. As an act of kindness and a convenience to the author, DeQuincey, in London, far from Wordsworth, undertook to see a rather poorly prepared manuscript through the press. Its lack of punctuation, illegibility, and many revisions by Wordsworth made the task of editing very difficult (*Cf.* John Edwin Wells, *The Story of Wordsworth's "Cintra,"* *Studies in Philology*, Jan., 1921, xviii, 33; also J. E. Wells, *T. L. S.*, Nov. 3, 1932, p. 815). As a buffer between a scrupulous author and a not too accommodating printer DeQuincey took much punishment. The work finally appeared too late to be most useful and in a form displeasing to those most nearly concerned. Both author and editor kept patience during the printing, but Wordsworth in a letter to Daniel Stuart severely blamed DeQuincey after publication: "But it avails nothing to find fault, especially with one [who] has taken such pains (according to the best of his judgement) to forward this business—that he has failed is too clear, and not without great blame on his own part (being a man of great abilities and the best feelings, but, as I have found, not fitted for smooth and speedy progress in business)" (*Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: M.Y.*, i, 319). De Quincey had his troubles about punctuation, for in another letter to the same correspondent Wordsworth wrote: "The fact is that Mr. DeQuincey must have insisted upon his punctuation being attended to, and the Printer must have been put out of humour by this and therefore refused to go on with the work" (*ibid.*, i, 313).

<sup>7</sup> Southey refers to a visit to his beloved brother, Dr. Henry Herbert Southey. Henry, a fellow student at Edinburgh with Sir William Knighton, to whom the second letter in this section is addressed, had an illustrious medical career, becoming physician ordinary to George IV in 1823 and physician extraordinary to Queen Adelaide in 1830. He also tried his hand at literature. Southey's concern for the health of his "new sister" seems to have been justified, for, though the editor has not been able to discover the exact date of her decease, Southey writes about "Harry's late brother-in-law" on May 9, 1812 (*Selections from the Letters*, ii, 268), and on November 11, 1814 (*ibid.*, ii, 379) "that he [Harry] is likely to give me a new sister." He did so in the summer of 1815.

<sup>8</sup> Who the friends were with a name "the same as that French pie" each reader may guess for himself; perhaps it was Gateau or Pateyl

2) *Robert Southey to Sir William Knighton*<sup>9</sup>

To Sir William Knighton Bart. &amp;c &amp;c &amp;c

Hanover Square London

Keswick. 30 March. 1821.

My Dear Sir

I am greatly obliged to you for presenting my *Vision of Judgement* to the King, & for communicating to me the very gratifying manner<sup>1</sup> in which his Majesty has been pleased to mention it. In writing upon public occasions, it has been & will be my earnest desire to produce something which may inculcate & enforce right opinions,—with the hope that it may prove of some immediate utility, & be not unworthy of being read hereafter. His Majestys approbation is the best proof which could be obtained that this desire will not be disappointed.

<sup>9</sup> Sir William Knighton (1776–1836) was a fellow student of Southey's brother Henry at Edinburgh. He rose rapidly in the medical profession and was eventually appointed physician to the Prince of Wales. When the Prince ascended the throne as King George IV, Knighton retained to an unusual degree the high esteem and confidence of the monarch, who made him his private secretary and keeper of the royal purse. He rapidly and efficiently reduced to order and solvency the chaotic financial affairs of the king, and was entrusted with many important missions at home and on the continent.

<sup>1</sup> In the storm of abuse and adverse criticism culminating in Byron's travesty, which Southey's impossible poem and its irritating Preface had aroused, the message transmitted in this letter by Sir William was extremely gratifying. Four days later, April 3, Southey wrote his friend, Grosvenor C. Bedford (*Selections from the Letters*, II, 240) "The King has desired Sir William Knighton to let me know that 'he has read the "*Vision of Judgement*" twice, and that he is much gratified by the dedication, and pleased with the poem.' Could you get a copy sent with the despatches to our minister at Florence for Landor, who is at Pisa?" The next day he wrote his friend Wynn much to the same effect: "The King sends me word that he has read the '*Vision of Judgement*' twice, is much gratified with the dedication, and pleased with the poem" (*ibid.*, III, 245). Once more, at least, he wrote in similar manner, this time to the Rev. Nicholas Lightfoot: "The King sent me word that he had read the *Vision of Judgement* twice and was well pleased with it; and he afterwards told my brother (Dr. S.) at the drawing-room, that I had sent him a very beautiful poem, which he had read with great pleasure" (*Life and Correspondence*, V, 84). Little more than a year later Southey was the recipient of another equally flattering commendation from his sovereign. On December 20, 1822, he wrote his friend Bedford: "I have just received an official communication from Sir William Knighton, which, though it be marked *private*, there can be no unfitness in my communicating to you. It is in these words, 'I am commanded by the King to convey to you the estimation in which His Majesty holds your distinguished talents, and the usefulness and importance of your literary labours. I am further commanded to add, that His Majesty receives with great satisfaction the first volume of your valuable work on the late Peninsular War.' This is the letter, and at the head of it is written—'entirely approved. G.R.' Is not this very gracious? and how many persons there are whom such communication would make quite happy. For myself I am sorry there are so few persons connected with me who can be gratified by it, and wish my good Aunt Mary had been here to have enjoyed it" (*ibid.*, V, 131–2).

The opinions which have as yet reached me concerning the metre<sup>2</sup> of the poem, are exactly what private trials had brought me to expect. Women are at first perplexed at the appearance of the verse; but upon reading it aloud, they presently perceive the rhythm, & then they like it. My friend Charles Wynn<sup>3</sup> avowing that his prejudice against it is inveterate, acknowledges that he dislikes it less than he expected. Young poets admire it with enthusiasm; & endeavour to persuade me that it is a finer measure than blank verse. Their elders, whom I call my peers,<sup>4</sup> appreciate fairly its merits & defects, & giving a decided verdict in its favour, pronounce it a legitimate & powerful metre, & think that our literature is enriched by its introduction.

Twenty years ago I planned a poem upon the Deluge,<sup>5</sup> with the in-

<sup>2</sup> There can be little doubt that Southey was too sanguine about the merits of the metre of his poem. Coleridge contended in his *Biographia Literaria* that it was the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* that was responsible for the severity of the attack on Wordsworth's poems in that work. In like manner we may contend that it was Southey's defence of his hexameters in the Preface to his poem and in his letters that intensified adverse criticism on his work,—not so much the metre itself, though that is nigh impossible, as the persistence of the defence. To experiment with it had long been in his mind. As early as 1811 he wrote: "It has long been a favourite project of mine to write one poem in hexameters. . . . I can write them with as much facility as any other metre" (*Selections from the Letters*, ii, 214).

<sup>3</sup> Southey wrote Wynn April 4, 1821: "Concerning the metre, I have the full and entire concurrence of the poets whom I know, and of the female readers. Nor indeed have I heard as yet of any repugnance to it except from you, whom, as you know, I expected to *ride upon an insurmountable obstacle!*" (*Selections from the Letters*, iii, 245.)

<sup>4</sup> In a letter dated December 21, 1820, to G. C. Bedford, after defending the metre in a spirited manner, Southey gives us some insight as to the identity of his "peers" whose favor in the matter he has won. "I have tried the verse upon ears enough to judge of its effect. Those persons who were most inclined to disapprove were shaken in their decided prejudice against it. Wynn, instead of exclaiming against the possibility of the design, objected to the quantity of one or two syllables. Bowles protested against the attempt, and acknowledged its success when he heard the first thirty lines. Wordsworth and Barry Cornwall admit it to be a legitimate English metre, noways unsuited to the language. You can answer for its effect upon your own ears. No person has thought it forced, or uncouth, or ludicrous. . . . Let it be abused, I care not. I have wished for more than twenty years to make the experiment, and the experiment reconciled me to a subject which I should otherwise not willingly have taken up" (*Selections from the Letters*, iii, 221-2). To this list of "peers" on another occasion he added the name of Landor, for in a letter to Bedford, April 3, 1821, he remarked: "Landor has only seen the first paragraph, which I sent him in a letter, and it has made him a convert to the metre. This is no slight conquest, for except Wynn I had looked upon him as the person among all my friends least likely to be reconciled to it. But the verdict of my peers is most decidedly in its favour" (*ibid.*, iii, 240).

<sup>5</sup> December 31, 1809, Southey wrote J. N. White: "Some gentleman gives his plan for 'The Deluge' in the last 'Monthly Magazine.' In 1801 I formed a plan upon the same subject while on my way home from Lisbon. It will never be executed; but it was not ill conceived, and had many grand situations. . . . 'The Deluge' and 'The Last Day' are also subjects too vast; no canvas can hold—no imagination conceive them" (*Selections from the Letters*, ii, 184).

tention of writing it in this measure, meaning to show in what manner the wickedness of mankind was produced in the Old World by the two opposite extremes of political evil,—such a tyranny on the one hand as Buonaparte afterwards went far towards establishing, & such a spirit of Jacobinism on the other as is at this day at work, here at home, as well as over the whole continent. The design has long been laid aside, but the course of events has tended to show that it was not ill conceived in this respect.

Believe me my Dear Sir

with many thanks

Yours faithfully

Robert Southey

3) *Robert Southey to the Right Hon. Charles Watkin Williams Wynn*

My dear Wynn <sup>6</sup>

[Early July, 1824] <sup>7</sup>

Mrs. Hughes's <sup>8</sup> letter told me of Elmsleys death,—<sup>9</sup> how many a pleasant recollection will be saddened by that event! You will miss him more often than I shall do,—but will not regret him more. I am

<sup>6</sup> The Right Hon. Charles Watkin Williams Wynn, M.P., was one of Southey's closest friends, of long standing, a frequent and constant correspondent, to whom Southey addressed many letters.

<sup>7</sup> This letter or note is undated, but apparently was written early in July, 1824, for in reply to her letter containing the sad news, Southey wrote Mrs. Hughes on July 4, 1824, as follows: "Your letter brought me the first and only intelligence that I have received of Elmsley's death. His place will not easily be filled at Oxford, and that walk of letters which he had chosen; but to his friends it never can be supplied. For myself it is a loss which will be perceived, whether I look backward or forward. Many recollections which used to be cheerful ones, must now change their character; and I feel myself left with one friend less in the world, at an age when we rarely form new friendships, even if a new friend could ever supply the place of an old one" (*Selections from the Letters*, iii, 430-1).

<sup>8</sup> Mrs. Hughes was the wife of Thomas Hughes, D.D., Canon of St. Paul's and mother of the talented John Hughes of Oriel, author of "An Itinerary of Provence and the Rhone" and other literary works of considerable merit. Southey wrote her many letters.

<sup>9</sup> Strange to say, the Rev. Peter Elmsley, a scholar of note, did not die until March 8, 1825. Southey wrote Mrs. Hughes August 12, 1824, regarding her error and his friendship with Elmsley. "I am indebted to your report of Elmsley's death for the pleasure which I felt, after speaking and thinking, and dreaming of him as dead, in hearing that he was likely to recover; a pleasure worth all the previous pain, and of that kind indeed that I know nothing which can be compared to it. When I was within reach of Elmsley we saw a great deal of each other, and he is one of those friends from whose society I have derived not merely temporary enjoyment, but permanent benefit. The chances of life have separated us for many years, without in any degree weakening our mutual regard; and upon hearing of his death I felt that I had lost what in declining years we can ill afford to part with, an object of esteem and affection,—one of the friends of my youth. Certainly I never received so much delight from any letter, as from that which told me



more indebted to him than he himself knew;—for it was a conversation with him in your rooms at Lincons Inn, that made me first distrust my own opinions—when I was most confident & they were most erroneous. He would have known this if he had survived me,—for my debts of gratitude will not be buried with me.

God bless you  
R S.

4) Robert Southey to William Turner<sup>1</sup>

To William Turner Esq<sup>re</sup>.

32 Red Lion Square

Keswick, 29 Oct. 1837

Dear Sir

My second letter will ere this have reached your Father, in which I informed him of Mr G. Stephen's interview with Mr Cradock,<sup>2</sup> & that the opinion formed by Mr Stephen in consequence agreed with the view which your friends had taken of the case.—I hear ill of the affairs of the House from various quarters; but it seems that *I hold a lien upon property*<sup>3</sup> the value of which must considerably exceed the amount of what is due to me. This is admitted. I have done nothing to defeat my own claim, & opinions concur in advising me to wait the result.<sup>4</sup>

he was alive and recovering. He is well enough to have left Oxford for the house of his sister-in-law, near Croydon, where Wynn and Bedford visited him about a fortnight ago, and found him so confident of his own strength as to talk of seeing Keswick this year as a possible thing" (*Selections from the Letters*, iii, 433). In his dedication to Wynn of his *Vindiciae Ecclesiae Anglicanae* Southey pays a glowing tribute to Elmsley.

<sup>1</sup> William Turner was the son of Southey's old friend, Sharon Turner (1768–1847). The father, a barrister, historian, and man of letters, Southey had known, as he states in the letter, for more than forty years.

<sup>2</sup> Baldwin and Cradock, as the reader will recall, were the recipients of the second letter from Coleridge included in this article. To him they were benefactors in the bankruptcy proceedings of the publisher, Rest Fenner. Now, some five years later, they are bankrupts themselves and Southey's interests are in danger. They were the publishers of his monumental *Life and Works of William Cowper*, for which labor they were to pay him 1000 guineas. "The sum," Southey wrote, "was intended to cover Cuthbert's expenses through his University course. Even if it should be materially diminished, or lost, it will not distress me. Dr. Bell left me 1000 l. that sum is vested in the French funds, and, if need be, may be drawn out for this purpose. But my own opinion is, that the copyright is good security for payment in full" (*The Life and Correspondence*, vi, 342).

<sup>3</sup> These words are underscored with pencil and marked in the margin of the page. Across the top of the letter, also in pencil and apparently in Southey's hand, is the following statement: "Tom Longman told me that the stock of Cowpers Works was in Chas. Baldwins hands as security for the 30,000 he has advanced the house—& that he claims a lien on them."

<sup>4</sup> In spite of Southey's expressed lack of concern in this matter, he nevertheless, as this

In this state of things I need not trouble you & your excellent father farther. Mr Stephen having seen Mr Cradock, as acting for me, it will be better for me on that account, when any proposal from the House is made, to refer it to him. How much I feel myself obliged to you, & to my excellent old friend (of more than forty years standing) I hope it is not needful to say,—for if it were I should have great difficulty in expressing it.

We continue in the same state, looking for that deliverance which will indeed be a blessed release.<sup>6</sup> My poor daughters have been mercifully supported thro this long trial. When the necessity for exertion ceases they will, I know, for a while feel as if all strength had left them; but even then the prevailing feeling will be that of thankfulness.

Farewell my dear Sir & believe me to be

Your most obliged & faithful servant

Robert Southey.

letter shows, sought legal advice. A passage in a letter which he wrote to John Rickman, six days earlier than this one, throws a bit more light on the affair. "It is likely that I shall not be a sufferer by Baldwin and Cradock's failure. H. Taylor and Stephens' opinion upon the matter; and he very kindly got his brother, who is a solicitor, to call on Cradock. It appeared to him, on inquiry, as it had done to me, that they have taken care to secure me; and to effect this, they did not send me their bills upon the completion of the work. The copyright thus rests with me, and without my assignment they cannot dispose of the property of the edition; it yet must be disposed of, and, being worth considerably more than my claim of 1000 l., they who are winding up the affairs, it is supposed, must pay me, to enable them to effect the sale" (*Selections from the Letters*, iv, 535). In spite of Southey's feeling of security in this business, his son informs us that the result "was not so favourable as he had anticipated, for in addition to much trouble, and of necessity some anxiety, he received 250 l. less than the stipulated payment" (*The Life and Correspondence*, vi, 341).

<sup>6</sup> A reference to the approaching death of Southey's wife, Edith Fricker, which came November 16, 1837. Elsewhere he writes: "Our long tragedy is now drawing to its close, and, thank God, without any suffering of body or of mind" (*Selections from the Letters*, iv, 535). In the letter before us Southey anxiously anticipates the blow to his daughters, not realizing that it would be most severe on himself. "It has left a sense of bereavement which I had not expected to feel, lost as she has been to me for the last three years, and worse than lost" (*The Life and Correspondence*, vi, 351-2). Then, in this same letter to his friend Bedford, follows one of the noblest tributes that could be paid by a bereaved husband to his deceased wife: "During more than two-thirds of my life, she had been the chief object of my thoughts, and I of hers. No man ever had a truer help-mate! no children a more careful mother. No family was ever more wisely ordered, no housekeeping ever conducted with greater prudence, or greater comfort." At the end of this encomium, which continues at considerable length, one is impelled to ponder whether Edith Fricker was vastly superior to her sister Sarah as a wife or was Southey vastly superior to Coleridge as a husband. The death of his wife was the beginning of the end for Southey, for although he unwisely married again in less than two years and lived on until March 21, 1843, after his great sorrow he failed rapidly in mind and body.

## IV

## TWO LETTERS BY WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

1) *William Wordsworth to the Rev. William Jackson*To The Rev<sup>d</sup> William Jackson,<sup>6</sup>

Queen's College, Oxford

[March, 1828] <sup>7</sup>

My dear Friend,

I must scrawl you a Congratulation. You have done well in accepting the living—it is a great honor to be brought so near such a man as Lord Lonsdale<sup>8</sup> by his own choice. I cannot say how highly gratified I am in seeing two friends among the highest in my esteem thus behaving, thus disposed, and thus circumstanced, towards each. It will not escape the notice of the Lowther family that you have made a great sacrifice of income, & that will no doubt be considered upon a future occasion.—Your place I fear will be but ill supplied in Queen's—tell me about this,

<sup>6</sup> The Rev. William Jackson was the son of the Rev. Thomas Jackson, Rector at Grasmere (1806–21), and sometimes pleased the Wordsworths by taking his father's place in the pulpit. In 1816 he received a fellowship in Queen's College, Oxford; and was appointed Chaplain in 1817. He became Rector at Whitchaven in 1821; at Lowther, April 17, 1828, apparently leaving some more lucrative position at Queen's College, at Penrith, March 28, 1833; and at Cliburn in 1841. On April 28, 1846, Wordsworth wrote him a letter of congratulation on his appointment to the Chancellorship of Carlisle. He became Archdeacon of Carlisle in 1855 and Canon in 1858. In 1862 he went back to his beloved Queen's College as Provost. He married in 1829 Julia Eliza Crump, daughter of the owner of Allan Bank. Jackson's friendship with the Wordsworth family was close, and he rendered much service to the poet's sons.

<sup>7</sup> Undated, but an approximate date may be established from internal evidence. Jackson has just been appointed Rector of Lowther, and we know that he officially took up his duties April 17, 1828. If further evidence is required it may be found in a letter, dated March [1828] (*Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: the Later Years*, ed. by E. de Selincourt, 1, 294), from Wordsworth to his wife and daughter, written a day later than the one before us and giving much the same news: "The day before yesterday Mrs. B. Harrison was brought to bed of a stout [? ponderous] Boy—she is doing well. Mr. W. Jackson has been presented by Lord L. to the living at Lowther which he has accepted. . . . John arrived the day before yesterday." In this last sentence Wordsworth apparently meant to say that John arrived yesterday, that is, assuming that he is writing a day later than in the letter before us. In the latter he does not mention John's arrival and when Miss Hutchinson takes up the letter she speaks of him as still at Cambridge; he arrives, however, as she finishes her postscript at 7 o'clock.

<sup>8</sup> Lord Lowther, second Earl of Lonsdale, won the love and friendship of Wordsworth and his brothers and sister by restoring to them their patrimony, unjustly withheld from them by his father, Sir James Lowther, first Earl of Lonsdale. Wordsworth benefited much by this friendship and gave in return his loyal support, especially to his patron's son, William, in the spirited election contest with Henry Broughton in 1818.

for the apprehension is almost the only drawback upon the event. There are certain points which I shall not allude to till I have the pleasure of conversing with you, merely hinting at present that they belong to the situation of the Rectory with regard to the Castle—

It concerns us much to hear that you have not been well. The professional duty of Lowther cannot be injurious to you it is so light—but the contrary. We are pleased that you like Charles W—<sup>9</sup> You perhaps saw the notice of his brother C— in the papers how near *he* was to the University Scholarship—I wish Charles may be more fortunate—but I fear his passion for Cricket tennis &c

I am just upon the point of making up my Stamp off Quarterly Account so that I cannot request you to pay for the Battles<sup>1</sup> till I know how it stands; the office having recently called upon us for payments not required till this quarter—such appears to be the want of money in the exchequer.

Your Brother<sup>2</sup> never approaches these downs—so we had heard nothing from him about Lowther.

I have the pleasure to tell you that Mrs Benson Harrison<sup>3</sup> was last night brought to bed of a stout & ponderous Boy. Mrs Fisher is with her. She had I believe a favorable time. Her Husband by medical advice has kept the house all Winter—for my own part I cannot but think him in a ticklish way—his malady is a slight inflammation in the Trachea which nothing but care in the opinion of his Physician Dr Ainslie & of

<sup>9</sup> Charles Wordsworth (1806–1892) and Christopher Wordsworth (1807–1885) were the brilliant sons of the poet's youngest brother Christopher

<sup>1</sup> Battles or battels is a word still in common use at Oxford, meaning, according to *N.E.D.*, college accounts for board and provisions supplied from the kitchen, or it may apply to the whole accounts for board, lodging, rates, tuition, etc. In December, 1826, Wordsworth's son John took his degree from New College, Oxford. The next year he was back in college preparing to take Orders, and apparently, according to Miss Hutchinson in the letter before us, "was ordained on the 2nd" [of March, 1828]. William Jackson had been requested (*Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth. L.Y.*, 1, 263) by Wordsworth to give John advice and attention in his preparation for Orders, and now was charged with the task of paying bills at New College. In the letter quoted above in Note 7 we also learn more of the matter: "Bills to the amount of upwards of 60 pounds including the one paid by Mr. Jackson, have been sent for battles, the Taylor's bill not included, 7 pounds for a new suit, one also left at Cambridge, so that with Whitwick furniture, and John's journey and settling etc the expenses of John's account will be very formidable."

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Jackson, agent of Lady le Fleming at Rydal.

<sup>3</sup> Mrs. Benson Harrison, née Dorothy Wordsworth, a cousin of William Wordsworth, lived with her husband at Green Bank near Ambleside. She was the youngest daughter of Wordsworth's uncle and guardian, Richard Wordsworth.

Mr Carr can prevent terminating in consumption. Farewell— God bless you[.] I give up the pen to Miss Hutchinson. Lord Greenville <sup>4</sup> I have heard is dying; [certainly?] <sup>5</sup> much about his successor as chancellor

Ever faith[f]ully yours W W.

[Sara Hutchinson writes]

Mr. W. ought to have left me the only piece of news which the neighborhood affords as he has ordered me to fill up the paper for you— I need not do it with congratulations for you know full well we shall all be *right glad* to have you in Westmorland again— Our Travellers send us upon the whole very favorable accounts of themselves—tho' poor Dora has had many attacks of cold during the winter—& was when we last heard suffering a little from indigestion—but she is in excellent spirits & her mother [now?] thinks her health notwithstanding greatly improved— They leave Herefordshire next Monday—will visit poor Mrs Gee & in April—perhaps about the middle of that month go to Cambridge. It is their intention to stop at Oxford in their way—and if you are not there the disappointment will be great—but no doubt they will acquaint you or Charles with their movements— Mr W. will meet them at C. & intends being in Town in May—not sooner than the 11<sup>th</sup>. John was ordained on the 2<sup>nd</sup> & is still at Cambridge— The examination was very easy & he got well through it— I wish he had had a "*tidier*" curacy than Whitwick— He will be quite *lost* among the Stocking weavers—especially as he is obliged to live alone— Our neighbours are all well— Mrs. Luff as busy as ever making improvements[ ] So is Barber—building himself a bed-room 30 feet long—perhaps I told you this before, for I recollect writing it to some one— & I know no other of my correspondents that it was likely to amuse except yourself, or Quillinan[.]

Take care you do not use us as shabbily the next vacation as you did the last! God bless you! Truly your friend

S. H.

I have tried in vain to mend W.'s Letter—so you must make it out yourself—if you can.<sup>6</sup> Mr W. will thank you if you can learn the expense of keeping Johns name on the books at New Col[.] John is this moment returned 7 oclock

<sup>4</sup> William Wyndham Grenville, Baron Grenville, did not die until January 13, 1834, though in feeble health for several years. He was elected Chancellor of Oxford in 1809 and was succeeded after his death by Arthur Wellesley, Duke of Wellington.

<sup>5</sup> This word, partly cut away with the seal in the manuscript, cannot be determined beyond a doubt.

<sup>6</sup> Any one who has wrestled with Wordsworth's "scrawl" in this letter will fully appreciate Miss Hutchinson's remark

## 2) William Wordsworth to the Rev. William Jackson

To the Rev<sup>d</sup> W<sup>m</sup> Jackson

Whitehaven

[April, 1830]<sup>7</sup>

My dear Friend,

We congratulate you both, heartily, upon the *acquisition* of which your kind Letter informed us, which would have been immediately acknowledged but for the near opportunity of Joanna's departure— We hope that Mrs. Jackson & the Infant are doing well May this Little-one grow up to be a comfort & blessing to you both!<sup>1</sup>—

If you have seen John & Dora you may perhaps have heard of my business-trip to Ulverstone—I returned up the Duddon—a charming ride, at all seasons!<sup>1</sup>—We have no news from this place; I would willingly supply the deficiency by some account of a Letter we have had from our Nephew John at Cambridge, but I fear Dora who has seen the Letter may have anticipated me, in which case what I am about to write will be weary, stale, flat & unprofitable, indeed! Dr Wordsworth, it appears, has been in active correspondence lately with the Bp of London<sup>8</sup> upon ecclesiastical [*sic*] affairs; & has spent a day with him at Fulham. The wiser Heads of Cambridge, among whom be assured I include my own Br, are afraid of Blomfield's meddling propensities—His attachment to the Church is not doubted, but his respect for the Church as *by law established* is not suffered to abate his overweening confidence in his own judgement His rash & *illegal* dealing with the Whitehall Preachers

<sup>7</sup> The approximate date of this letter may be determined by the reference in the postscript to Coleridge's new book, *On the Constitution of the Church and State*, which appeared in 1830 with a second edition in 1831. Reference is also made to Wordsworth's "business trip to Ulverstone" which was made in the spring of 1830 (*Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth* LY, I, 467) perhaps prior to March 25th, for on that day, Dorothy writes, he had been from home (*ibid.* 456). On the very last days of March of the same year Dora was staying with her brother John at Moresby (*ibid.* 456–7). On April 27, 1830, Wordsworth wrote his brother (*ibid.* 460–1) regarding Mr. Rose's course of sermons at Cambridge.

<sup>8</sup> Wordsworth numbered among his correspondents both Charles James Blomfield (1786–1857), noted divine and scholar translated to the bishopric of London 1828, and Hugh James Rose (1795–1838), also a scholar of some eminence and select preacher at Cambridge in 1828–1830, 1833–1834. With them he did not hesitate to take issue, to the former he addressed a long, well reasoned letter on the Catholic Relief Bill (*Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth* LY, I, 356–67). Wordsworth's opinion of Blomfield in the letter before us is strikingly at variance with that of the Bishop's biographer in *DNB*, who writes "the duties of which [bishopric of London] he performed with immense energy, and, on the whole, with sound common sense and moderation." On August 28, 1827, Wordsworth had been more complimentary when Blomfield, then Bishop of Chester, was his neighbor at Ivy Cot. The Bishop is a delightful companion, and is indefatigable in the duties of his high Office (*ibid.*, 271).

gave great offence at Cambridge. The Master of Trinity's object no doubt would be to temper & restrain his impetuosity[.] You will be pleased to hear that Mr Rose has been delivering a course of sermons at St Marys which have made a great impression— John says upwards of two hundred Gownsmen were unable to gain admission on the last day of the course, the church was so crowded[.] This is surely highly to the honor of the rising generation, and in no small degree to the Preacher. If you have heard all this from Dora or from John pray excuse my bad luck; if I could have sent you any news from this quarter, I should have preferred doing so.—I regret much that John is not oftener at your house—but I hope that his leisure time is not thrown away.—With kindest regards to Mrs Jackson & yourself from all believe me faithfully yours

W Wordsworth

Has Mr Coleridges book on Church & State reached you—we hear from his Daughter that a 2nd Edition is called for— Neither Southey nor I have seen it; nor Hartley.

# Byron and the East: Literary Sources of the "Turkish Tales"

By HAROLD S. L. WIENER

## I

THE interest which Byron, as a child, displayed in the Near East, and which he retained until his death, was by no means accidental. The end of the eighteenth century saw not only a vast increase in the resources of Oriental scholarship, stimulated by the efforts of Sir William Jones, but also an ever growing number of travelers to the Near East, many of whom returned to England to record in detail the experiences they had encountered on their journeys.<sup>1</sup>

Consequently, in the year 1800, a young Englishman in pursuit of an education would inevitably have encountered many books which treated at length the history, language, literature, sociology, and topography of the Levant. Moreover he might well have felt impelled to visit the

<sup>1</sup> For English literary interest in the Near East before Sir William Jones, see Edna Osborne, "Oriental Diction and Theme in English Verse, 1740-1840," *University of Kansas Humanistic Studies* 11, 1914. Miss Osborne points out that Orientalism in English prose and poetry may be traced back to the time of the Crusades and to the medieval romances. A special study of Orientalism in English letters is to be found in Samuel C. Chew's *The Crescent and the Rose* (Oxford, 1938). For the later development of the Oriental influence, see Martha Pike Conant, *The Oriental Tale in England in the Eighteenth Century* (New York, 1908).

On the general subject of the literature of travel, a useful bibliography is furnished by Edward G. Cox. A Reference Guide to the Literature of Travel, *University of Washington Publications in Language and Literature* 19, 1935. Early English travel in the Near East is adequately discussed by Warner G. Rice, "Early English Travelers to Greece and the Levant," *Essays and Studies in English and Comparative Literature*, *University of Michigan Publications* 10, 1933, 205-60.

Wallace Cable Brown has investigated the popularity of travel books from 1775 to 1825 and has published three articles on the subject: "The Popularity of English Travel Books about the Near East, 1775-1825," *Philological Quarterly*, XV, 1936, 70-80; "Byron and English Interest in the Near East," *Studies in Philology*, XXXIV, 1937, 55-64, and "English Travel Books and Minor Poetry about the Near East, 1775-1825," *Philological Quarterly*, XVI, 1937, 249-71.



countries therein described, were such an opportunity to present itself. Thus, Byron was merely following the dictates of fashion in reading Turkish histories and travel books during his boyhood, and his decision to tour the Near East after he had come of age was the natural outgrowth of his reading. His first visit to the Mediterranean countries was unquestionably responsible in the main for the composition of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Cantos I and II, and the Turkish Tales;<sup>2</sup> the original impetus to his journey through Turkey, however, and, consequently, to the writing of the Turkish Tales is to be found in his early reading. He himself supports this opinion and all investigation appears to substantiate the truth of his claim.

The following study will examine, first, those books to which Byron refers directly and which he uses at times as direct sources (such as *Vathek*, *Bibliothèque Orientale*, the works of Sir William Jones, and introductory essays for the *Koran* and the *Arabian Nights*); in the last section, I wish to review briefly some of the books which in all likelihood provided the background for Byron's general knowledge of Eastern life and manners. Such an investigation will show, I believe, that, although he was usually writing without the help of literary sources, Byron frequently exercised particular care with what he calls the correctness of his costume. It is a curious quality in this poet who is often called "romantic," for want of a more illustrative word,—a quality too seldom recognized.

In January 1824, Byron entertained Prince Alexander Mavrocordatos in his quarters at Missolonghi. Although the visit was made chiefly for political purposes, other topics besides affairs of state were discussed by the Greek republican and the poet. One evening they engaged in a battle of wits, to try their skill in recollecting Turkish history. The result of this badinage, as reported by Count Gamba, is amusing:

Mavrocordato [*sic*] is esteemed very accomplished in this particular, and tried Byron on the genealogy of the Ottoman emperors. Wherever there was any difference of opinion, we always found on reference, that Byron was right: his memory, indeed, was surprisingly accurate. He said "The Turkish history was one of the first books that gave me pleasure when a child; and I believe it had much influence on my subsequent

<sup>2</sup> I have examined the influence, upon the Turkish Tales, of Byron's observations and experiences in the East in *The Eastern Background of Byron's Turkish Tales* [unpublished doctoral dissertation], Yale, 1938. The present article forms a part of that study. By *Turkish Tales*, I refer to *The Giaour* (1813), *The Bride of Abydos* (1813), *The Corsair* (1814), and *The Siege of Corinth* (1816).

wishes to visit the Levant, and gave, perhaps, the oriental coloring which is observed in my poetry."<sup>3</sup>

Seventeen years earlier, Byron had already given evidence of his youthful familiarity with Turkish history. In the 1807 list of his childhood reading, under the heading of Turkey, he had written:

I have read Knolles, Sir Paul Rycaut, and Prince Cantemir, besides a more modern history, anonymous. Of the Ottoman history I know every event, from Tangralopi and afterwards Othman I to the peace of Passarowitz, in 1718,—the battle of Cutzka, in 1739, and the treaty between Russia and Turkey in 1790<sup>4</sup>

In 1818, commenting on the enthusiasm of the young Byron for Turkish history, Isaac Disraeli cited his reading of Rycaut, but mentioned no other source books. Byron, reading Disraeli's account, made a marginal entry which was later shown to Disraeli, who incorporated it in the third edition of his book. Byron's note read

Knolles—Cantemir—De Tott—Lady M. W. Montague—Hawkins's translation from Mignot's History of the Turks—the Arabian Nights— All travels or histories or books upon the East I could meet with, I had read, as well as Rycaut, before I was *ten years old*. I think the Arabian Nights first.<sup>5</sup>

In another section of the 1807 list, there is a catalogue of the poets of

<sup>3</sup> Count Peter Gamba, *A Narrative of Lord Byron's Last Journey to Greece* (1825), pp 148-9

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Moore, *Letters and Journals of Lord Byron with Notices of his Life*, 2 vols (London, 1830), I, 95-101 To be referred to as *Moore* The books referred to are Richard Knolles, *The Turkish History*, and its continuation by Sir Paul Rycaut, 1687-1700; Demetrius Cantemir, *The History of the Growth and Decay of the Ottoman Empire*, 1756 To be referred to as *Knolles* and *Cantemir* For information concerning the anonymous history, see below, p 125

<sup>5</sup> Isaac Disraeli, *The Literary Character*, 2 vols (London, 1818) This is the second edition and contains Disraeli's original comment For Byron's note, and Disraeli's remarks on it, see the third edition, 1822, pp 101-2

The additional books here mentioned by Byron are *Memoirs of the Baron de Tott, on the Turks and the Tartars* translated from the French, 2 vols (London, 1785), Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, *Works*, 5 vols (1803) Vincent Mignot, *The History of the Turkish, or Ottoman Empire* trans A Hawkins, 4 vols (London, 1787) The first two works will be referred to in this text as *Tott*, *Memoirs*, and *Montagu*

The edition of the *Arabian Nights* which Byron read before he was ten may possibly have been the original French translation by Antoine Galland, or an anonymous English translation, possibly that published in London in 1793 It is most probable that during the preparation of the Turkish Tales he used the edition of Jonathan Scott, 6 vols (1811), which appears as item No 23 in the 1816 sale catalogue of Byron's books, a copy of which may be found in the British Museum To be referred to as *Arabian Nights*.

remote corners of the world whose works he had scanned. In this, two items are conspicuous:

*Arabia*—Mahomet, whose Koran contains most sublime passages, far surpassing European poetry.

*Persia*—Ferdousi, author of the Shah Nameh, the Persian Iliad—Sadi, and Hafiz, the immortal Hafiz, the oriental Anacreon. The last is revered beyond any bard of ancient or modern times, by the Persians, who resort to his tomb near Shiraz, to celebrate his memory. A splendid copy of his works is chained to his monument.<sup>6</sup>

The importance of these citations is to be found not so much in the details as in the general effect. Byron's mind was sensitive and retentive. If, in 1824, he still retained the essential facts of Eastern geography, history, and custom, and could produce them at will, it is scarcely surprising that the readings should have left a marked imprint on the Turkish Tales written a decade earlier.

Was Byron's method of composition similar to that employed by his fellow poets? Did his reading, as did Coleridge's, drop into the "deep well of unconscious cerebration" there to merge "insensibly in hues and outlines with others of the myriad denizens of that mysterious deep" and result in the unconscious creation of the thing he thought he had remembered? <sup>7</sup> "Suspended in the dripping well of his imagination," did the commonest object become "encrusted with imagery," as with Shelley? <sup>8</sup> Or is it that in Byron the thing read never sank far below the surface of conscious cerebration? For Coleridge, if we are to believe Mr. Lowes, was often unaware of the actual source of his material at the moment of composition.<sup>9</sup>

Two quotations from Byron shed light on this problem. In a letter to Murray in 1817, describing Rome, he says:

My first impressions are always strong and confused, and my memory *selects* and reduces them to order, like distance in the landscape, and blends them better, although they may be less distinct.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Moore, i, 95-101. Although the above passage seems to indicate that Byron knew much about Arabian and Persian literature, it is more than likely that he encountered it chiefly through secondary sources by reading Henley's notes to Beckford's *Vathek* and the complete works of Sir William Jones. This subject will be more fully discussed below.

<sup>7</sup> J. L. Lowes, *The Road to Xanadu* (1927), pp. 56-7.

<sup>8</sup> Francis Thompson, *Shelley* (1909), p. 50.

<sup>9</sup> Mr. Lowes's interpretation has been called into question by R. C. Bald in "Coleridge and *The Ancient Mariner*." See above, pp. 1-46.

<sup>1</sup> *The Works of Lord Byron*, ed. R. E. Prothero. *Letters and Journals*, 6 vols. (London, 1898-1903), iv, 119. To be referred to as *L & J*.

Discussing the powers of memory when concerned with experience, he had written in his journal a few years earlier:

While you are under the influence of passions, you only feel, but cannot describe them,—any more than, when in action, you could turn round and tell the story to your next neighbour! When all is over,—all, all, and irrevocable,—trust to memory—she is then but too faithful.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps it is as he says, that his memory selected and reduced his impressions to order, but it must not be overlooked that he is referring specifically to impressions gathered from experience, not reading. If, however, his reading of the Turkish history in his youth "gave, perhaps, the Oriental coloring" to his poetry,<sup>3</sup> we may say that memory also reduced and selected the impressions of his reading.

Hand in hand with this selective power of memory goes a more conscious use of materials gathered from reading and experience. It takes the form of supplementary documentation. He desired to be faithful to Eastern life and, as we shall see later, he staunchly defended his fidelity. He was too much of a realist to give free reign to the fancy: "I could not write upon anything, without some personal experience and foundation."<sup>4</sup> In these words, written to Moore in 1816, we still find "experience." It was no longer present, however, in 1817 when, in musing over the history of Marino Faliero, he wrote to Murray from Venice:

I hate things *all fiction*; and therefore the *Merchant* and *Othello* have no great associations to me: but *Pierre* has. There should always be some foundation of fact for the most airy fabric, and pure invention is but the talent of a liar.<sup>5</sup>

If, as may be deduced from these remarks, Byron desired some foundation in fact for every piece of writing, we find that he had an even higher standard of accuracy for what he calls the "costume" of his poetry. When writing to Professor Clarke in 1813, he says:

Your very kind letter is the more agreeable, because, setting aside talents, judgments, and the *laudari a laudato*, etc., you have been on the spot; you have seen and described more of the East than any of your predecessors—I need not say how ably and successfully, and (excuse the bathos) you are one of the very few men who can pronounce how far my costume (to use an affected but expressive word) is correct. As to poesy, that is, as "men,

<sup>2</sup> *L & J*, II, 388

<sup>3</sup> See above, p. 90.

<sup>4</sup> *L & J*, III, 254.

<sup>5</sup> *L & J*, IV, 93.

gods, and columns," please to decide upon it; but I am sure that I am anxious to have an observer's, particularly a famous observer's, testimony on the fidelity of my manners and dresses; and, as far as memory and an oriental twist in my imagination have permitted, it has been my endeavour to present to the Franks, a sketch of that which you have and will present them a complete picture.<sup>6</sup>

There is no doubt that the powers of memory and an Oriental "twist" in Byron's imagination produced a large portion of the Eastern atmosphere in his poetry. There are, however, a few books which influenced the composition of the poems in a direct manner. The speed with which the tales were written belies the constant use of reference works, and Byron used them sparingly. He had an extensive knowledge of the East and could write upon general conditions there with ease. But the writing of certain passages in the tales required specific knowledge of small matters that necessitated authentic documentation. An illustration appears in the note which, in 1813, he appended to the fourth edition of *The Giaour*:

For the contents of some of the notes I am indebted partly to D'Herbelot,<sup>7</sup> and partly to that most Eastern, and, as Mr. Weber justly entitles it, "sublime tale," the "Caliph Vathek."<sup>8</sup> I do not know from what source the author of that singular volume may have drawn his materials; some of his incidents are to be found in the *Bibliothèque Orientale*, but for correctness of costume, beauty of description, and power of imagination, it far surpasses all European imitations, and bears such marks of originality that those who have visited the East will find some difficulty in believing it to be more than a translation. As an Eastern tale, even Rasselas must bow before it; his "Happy Valley" will not bear a comparison with the "Hall of Eblis."<sup>9</sup>

This implies, of course, that, even if the poems were struck off in a white heat of emotion,<sup>1</sup> the notes were prepared in a more studious moment. It quite naturally suggests that they were written with the

<sup>6</sup> *L & J*, II, 308-9. This is apparently in reply to a letter from Dr. Clarke praising *The Bride of Abydos*.

<sup>7</sup> Barthélemy D'Herbelot, *Bibliothèque Orientale* (Maestricht, 1776). This volume was in Byron's library and is listed as item 191 in the 1816 catalogue. To be referred to as *Herbelot*.

<sup>8</sup> William Beckford, *Vathek*, with notes by Samuel Henley, ed. Richard Garnett (London, 1893). The first English edition, which also included Henley's notes, was published in 1786. To be referred to as *Vathek*.

<sup>9</sup> *The Works of Lord Byron*, ed. E. H. Coleridge. *Poetry*, 7 vols. (London, 1898-1903), III, 144-5, note 1. To be referred to as *Poetry*.

<sup>1</sup> "It [*The Bride of Abydos*] was written in four nights to distract my dreams from [Lady Frances Wedderburn Webster]. Were it not thus, it had never been composed." *L & J*, II, 321.

*Bibliothèque Orientale* and *Vathek* close at hand. Byron occasionally acknowledged influences, seldom admitted borrowings. Consequently this open confession requires closer examination, and since the most hasty glance at *The Giaour* reveals that, of the two books mentioned, *Vathek* is more important in furnishing information, it will be convenient to examine it first.

## II

WHEN Byron first discovered *Vathek* is unknown. If Medwin is to be trusted, he had read the book in his youth, but whether or not his reading of it antedated 1813 by many years is a matter for conjecture.<sup>2</sup> Lady Caroline Lamb, finding the book on the table in Byron's quarters, opened it and scrawled the word "Remember me!" on the first page.<sup>3</sup> In 1818, Byron wrote to Rogers begging him to secure for him from Beckford a copy in manuscript of the remaining episodes designed for *Vathek*. At the same time he writes, "I have a French copy of *Vathek* which I bought at Lausanne"<sup>4</sup> This is the second copy in French which the poet had owned.<sup>5</sup> As late as 1823, when instructing his banker, Charles Barry, to sell the books he had left in Genoa, he still has suf-

In an entry in the same journal, for February 18, 1814, he writes 'The Corsair has been conceived, written, published, etc., since I last took up this journal [January 16, 1814]' *L & J*, II, 382

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Medwin, *Conversations of Lord Byron* (London, 1824) Pp 410-2

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p 329

<sup>4</sup> *L & J*, IV, 209 Encountering this letter to Rogers in his [Beckford's] copy of Moore's *Life of Byron* (II, 167), Beckford writes as follows 'Rather cool after all—considering the red hot partiality he professed for Vathek—a book I know, he used to carry about in his pocket, & which lay sometimes I have been told, under his very pillow—happy for him that he never saw these [*sic*] episodes—they would have roused him to frenzy—& have shortened the little rest he ever enjoyed—the most original of the set as full as it could glare of Hell & the Devil, I have since thrown into the fire—the two which remain are quite sufficiently Satanic—Your Corsairs & Don Juans are milk & water Puritans compared with Barkiarokh, whose atrocities shamelessly worked up & rhymingly paraphrased in the style of the passage about the moon & the cloud in his Siege of Corinth, might have furnished the material of half a dozen poems & extracted as many thousands from the coffers of absolute John [Murray] [Signed] W B'

Beckford's copy of Moore's *Life of Byron* with his MS notes is now in the library of Mr James T Babb of New Haven, who generously permitted me to examine it and quote from it

*The Episodes of Vathek*, which both Byron and Beckford mention, remained unpublished until 1912, when they appeared in London, translated from the French by Sir Frank Marzials. Byron never saw them.

For Beckford's allusion to Byron's borrowing in *The Siege of Corinth*, see below, p 103.

<sup>5</sup> The 1816 catalogue lists as item 312, "Vathek, par Beckford, 1815."

ficient interest in Beckford's masterpiece to request: "Also reserve a copy of *The Caliph Vathek* . . ." <sup>6</sup>

Obviously, Byron's interest in *Vathek* after 1816 is not reflected in the Turkish Tales, but it serves to show that the book which he had read in 1813 or earlier had made a strong impression upon him and had remained one of his favorite volumes to the end of his life.

The Turkish Tales were written quickly Byron scarcely found it necessary to verify each bit of Eastern imagery as it occurred to him. But once a poem was finished he found that certain Eastern expressions or images used in the text required annotation. Then, as he tells us, he turned to *Vathek*, or rather, as E. H. Coleridge aptly suggests, to Samuel Henley's notes to *Vathek*. <sup>7</sup>

Although for many years the relation between Beckford and Henley had been a mystery to students, Richard Garnett has now swept away the cloud that obscured it and has shown that Henley had not only sown the seed for the composition of *Vathek* in Beckford's mind, but had also suggested that a preface explaining the costume accompany the tale. <sup>8</sup> Beckford received this suggestion cordially and since he had already allowed Henley to translate *Vathek* into English from the original French, he also entrusted to him the task of preparing the preliminary dissertation and the notes to the story. He went further than that, however, in suggesting certain books which might be consulted in the preparation of the notes.

The "Arabian Nights" will furnish some illustrations, particularly as to Goules, &c; but much more may be learned from Herbelot's "Bibliothèque Orientale" and Richardson's "Dissertations." <sup>9</sup>

Henley's preliminary dissertation never appeared, but, against the wishes of Beckford, who had intended to publish the original French version first, he published his notes together with his English translation of the tale in 1786. Henley had done his task so well that Stephen Weston, discussing the book in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, implied that

<sup>6</sup> *L & J*, vi, 284

<sup>7</sup> *Poetry*, iii, 76

<sup>8</sup> *Vathek*, 'Introduction, *passim*. For a more technical analysis of the relations between Henley and Beckford, with special reference to early editions of *Vathek*, see John Carter, "The Lausanne Edition of Beckford's *Vathek*," *The Library*, 4th ser., xvii, March 1937, pp. 369-94.

<sup>9</sup> *Vathek*, x. The other book mentioned here, in addition to Herbelot, is John Richardson's *Dictionary, Persian, Arabic, and English, to which is prefixed, a dissertation on the languages, literature and manners of Eastern Nations*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1777).

the story had been written to serve as a background for the notes.<sup>1</sup>

A study of the notes to *Vathek* reveals that Henley made use of Beckford's suggestion; he constantly cites Herbelot, the *Arabian Nights*, and Richardson, as well as the Koran, George Sale's preliminary discourse, *Religious Ceremonies*, Sir William Jones, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, and others. It is with some suspicion, then, that one examines Byron's statement that he did not know the sources from which the author of *Vathek* had drawn his materials.<sup>2</sup> Henley has shown, by lavish annotation, what some of these sources were, and Byron must have read his notes carefully, for we find him using them frequently in his own notes. His indebtedness was truly to *Vathek* but he made good use of Henley also.

Early in *The Giaour* one encounters these lines

For there the Rose, o'er crag or vale,  
Sultana of the Nightingale,  
The maid for whom his melody,  
His thousand songs are heard on high,  
Blooms blushing to her lover's tale.<sup>3</sup>

For which passage, Byron wrote the following note: "The attachment of the nightingale to the rose is a well known Persian fable. If I mistake not, the 'Bulbul of a thousand tales' is one of his appellations."<sup>4</sup> No mention is made of *Vathek* here, but since Byron says that he used that book in the preparation of his own notes, it is not surprising to discover the original of this note there. When, in that tale, Nouronihar taunts Bababalouk with parodies of Persian verses, she sings, "Melodious Philomel, I am thy rose."<sup>5</sup> Henley's note for this passage is

The passion of the nightingale for the rose is celebrated over all the East. Thus Mesihî, as translated by Sir W. Jones —

"Come, charming maid, and hear thy poet sing,  
Thyself the rose, and he the bird of spring  
Love bids him sing, and love will be obey'd,  
Be gay too soon the flowers of spring will fade."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Gentleman's Magazine* lvi, January 1787, p. 55. Henley denies this implication in the next issue (lvi, February 1787, p. 120).

<sup>2</sup> See above, p. 94.

<sup>3</sup> *Poetry*, iii, 86-7, ll. 21-5.

<sup>4</sup> *Poetry*, iii, 86 n. 1.

<sup>5</sup> *Vathek*, 77.

<sup>6</sup> *Vathek*, 217. This and one or two other parallels between Byron's notes and those of Henley have already been noticed by E. H. Coleridge. It is nevertheless necessary for my purpose to restate the relationship.



Further on in *The Giaour*, we meet with the butterflies of Kashmir:

As rising on its purple wing  
The insect-queen of Eastern spring,  
O'er emerald meadows of Kashmeer  
Invites the young pursuer near,  
And leads him on from flower to flower  
A weary chase and wasted hour,  
Then leaves him, as it soars on high,  
With panting heart and tearful eye.<sup>7</sup>

Byron's note to these lines is: "The blue-winged butterfly of Kashmeer, the most rare and beautiful of the species."<sup>8</sup> And Beckford, in describing Vathek's first glimpse of Nouronihar, had written: "But her course was as difficult to follow as the flight of one of those beautiful blue butterflies of Cachemire, which are at once so volatile and rare."<sup>9</sup> Here it may be seen that Byron has followed Beckford's text more closely than Henley's note:

The same insects are celebrated in an unpublished poem of Mesihî. . . . Sir Anthony Shirley relates that it was customary in Persia "to hawke after butterflies with sparrows, made to that use, and stares." It is, perhaps, to this amusement that our author alludes in the context.<sup>1</sup>

A more striking set of parallels between Byron's notes and Henley's occurs in this passage from *The Giaour*, where Byron is describing the beauty of Leila:

But Soul beamed forth in every spark  
That darted from beneath the lid,  
Bright as the jewel of Giamschid.  
Yea, *Soul*, and should our prophet say  
That form was nought but breathing clay,  
By Alla! I would answer nay;  
Though on Al-Sirat's arch I stood,  
Which totters o'er the fiery flood,  
With Paradise within my view,  
And all his Houris beckoning through.  
Oh! who young Leila's glance could read  
And keep that portion of his creed  
Which saith that woman is but dust

<sup>7</sup> *Poetry*, III, 105, ll. 388-95.

<sup>8</sup> *Poetry*, III, 105 n. 1.

<sup>9</sup> *Vathek*, 83.

<sup>1</sup> *Vathek*, 222.

A soulless toy for tyrant's lust?  
 On her might Muftus gaze, and own  
 That through her eye the Immortal shone  
 On her fair cheek's unfading hue  
 The young pomegranate's blossoms strew  
 Their bloom in blushes ever new;  
 Her hair in hyacinthine flow

. . . . .

So moved on earth Circassia's daughter,  
 The loveliest bird of Franguestan!<sup>2</sup>

Since these lines are heavily annotated, we shall examine them with care. Byron's first note refers to "Giamschid":

The celebrated fabulous ruby of Sultan Giamschid, the embellisher of Istakhar; from its splendour, named Schebgerag, "the torch of night;" also "the cup of the sun," etc In the First Edition, "Giamschid" was written as a word of three syllables, so D'Herbelot has it, but I am told Richardson reduces it to a dissyllable, and writes "Jamshid" I have left in the text the orthography of the one with the pronunciation of the other<sup>3</sup>

E. H. Coleridge refers us to Henley's notes for the original of this, and it is plain that Byron owes his allusion to the famous jewel as "Schebgerag, the torch of night" and "the cup of the sun" to Henley who so describes it<sup>4</sup> The entry on *Giamschid* in Herbelot does not suggest Byron's note, however,<sup>5</sup> and since Henley cites Herbelot in his note, it is probable that Byron knew of its presence in the *Bibliothèque Orientale* from reading Henley's note. The discussion of the orthography and pronunciation of *Giamschid* is the result of a correspondence with Moore, who had enlightened him on the subject It is doubtful if Byron, in view of his words "I am told . . . , ' had actually consulted Richardson.<sup>6</sup>

Byron's next annotation reveals a closer parallel:

Al-Sirat, the bridge of breadth narrower than the thread of a famished spider, and sharper than the edge of a sword, over which the Mussulmans must *skate* into Paradise, to which it is the only entrance, but this is not the worst, the river beneath being hell itself, into which, as may be expected, the unskilful and tender of foot contrive to tumble with a "facilis

<sup>2</sup> *Poetry*, III, 108-11, ll 477-506

<sup>3</sup> *Poetry*, III, 108-9, n 1

<sup>4</sup> *Vathek*, 230 f

<sup>5</sup> *Herbelot*, 367-8

<sup>6</sup> *Moore*, I, 423 See also Byron's reply to Moore, *L & J*, II, 254

descensus Averni," not very pleasing in prospect to the next passenger. There is a shorter cut downwards for the Jews and Christians.<sup>7</sup>

And similarly Henley had written:

This bridge called in Arabic *al Sunat*, and said to extend over the infernal gulf, is represented as narrower than a spider's web, and sharper than the edge of a sword. Though the attempt to cross it be

"More full of peril, and advent'rous spirit,  
Than to o'erwalk a current, roaring loud,  
On the unsteadfast footing of a spear,"

yet the Paradise of Mahomet can be entered by no other avenue. Those, indeed, who have behaved well need not be alarmed; mixed characters will find it difficult, but the wicked soon miss their standing, and plunge headlong into the abyss.<sup>8</sup>

This scarcely requires comment. Obviously Byron is merely improving upon Henley's note by adding characteristic touches of humor.

The lines on Leila's beauty appear to be heavily indebted to *Vathek*. Byron had once again used Henley's notes in writing "Hyacinthine, in Arabic 'Sunbul;' as common a thought in the Eastern poets as it was among the Greeks."<sup>9</sup> For Henley had written

Literally, hyacinthine. The metaphor taken from this flower, expressed by the word *Sunbul*, is familiar to the Arabians. Thus, in Sir William Jones's *Solima*, an eclogue made up of Eastern images —

"The fragrant hyacinths of Azza's hair  
That wanton with the laughing summer air"

Nor was it less common to the Greeks —<sup>1</sup>

Here too comment is supererogatory. But although Coleridge has already noticed that resemblance, he has not mentioned the two others close by. For even though Byron, in his note on the pomegranate figure, realizes that his simile is extraordinarily common — "An Oriental simile, which may, perhaps, though fairly stolen, be deemed 'plus Arabe qu'en Arabie'"<sup>2</sup> — we cannot help noticing Henley's note on the passage where Gulchenrouz's cheeks "became the colour of the blossom of pomegranates."<sup>3</sup>

In the light of the other borrowings, it seems, then, more than mere

<sup>7</sup> *Poetry*, III, 109 n. 1.

<sup>8</sup> *Vathek*, 237.

<sup>9</sup> *Poetry*, III, 110 n. 1.

<sup>1</sup> *Vathek*, 208.

<sup>2</sup> *Poetry*, III, 110 n. 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Vathek*, 233.

coincidence when Henley tells us that the two young pages of *Vathek* were Circassians, a fact which is apparent from the description of their complexions, "more fair than the enamel of Franguistan,"<sup>4</sup> to find Byron saying of Leila "So moved on earth Circassia's daughter The Loveliest bird of Franguistan."<sup>5</sup>

One more instance is worthy of comment. Early in the story, the Caliph *Vathek* greets the stranger with the words "Accursed *Giaour*," and Henley repeats these words in his note to that passage. Byron's use of the word *giaour* is not unusual, but it is with something of a start that we find him using Beckford's expression

'Tis he! well met in any hour,  
Lost Leila's love—accursed *Giaour*!<sup>6</sup>

Byron's statement—that he was indebted to *Vathek* for the contents of some of his notes—is, then, but part of the truth. It may be seen that he used Henley's notes in the preparation of notes for his poem; that he used Henley's notes in writing the poem itself, that he used Beckford's story in the preparation of his own notes; and that he used Beckford's story in the composition of his own poem. His indebtedness to *Vathek* is greater than he suggests in the note to *The Giaour*.

The discussion, thus far, has been limited to an examination of *The Giaour* alone. Because of Byron's remark, one would naturally expect it to show the use of the book more clearly than the other Turkish Tales. Further analysis shows, however, that he had not yet forgotten Beckford and Henley when he composed *The Bride of Abydos*.

The first note of resemblance there is a familiar one. After *Giaffir* has gone to watch the games, leaving *Selim* alone with *Zuleika*, the girl attempts to rouse the boy from his preoccupation by picking a rose and giving it to him:

This rose to calm my brother's cares  
A message from the Bulbul bears<sup>7</sup>

Once again we are confronted with that "well-known Persian fable,"

<sup>4</sup> *Vathek*, 189

<sup>5</sup> *Poetry*, III, 111, ll. 505-6. Other parallels might be cited. Both Henley and Byron write notes on the "evil eye" (*Vathek*, 161, *Poetry*, III, 115 n. 2), muezzins and minarets (*Vathek*, 171, *Poetry*, III, 120 n. 1), palampores (*Vathek*, 195-6, *Poetry*, III, 117 n. 1), the expression "Bismillah" (*Vathek*, 203, *Poetry*, III, 113 n. 2), Eblis (*Vathek*, 244, *Poetry*, III, 121 n. 2), and Monker and Nakir (*Vathek*, 236, *Poetry*, III, 121 n. 1).

<sup>6</sup> *Vathek*, 19 and 169, *Poetry*, III, 115, ll. 618-9

<sup>7</sup> *Poetry*, III, 170, ll. 287-8.

the "attachment of the nightingale to the rose."<sup>8</sup> And later on an allusion to the treasures buried in the "caves of Istakar" recalls the great wealth of Giamschid.<sup>9</sup>

In these two places Byron is alluding to legends so common to the East that it is presumptuous to assert that, but for *Vathek*, his lines would have read differently. And, as is to be expected, no allusions to *Vathek* appear in the notes to *The Bride of Abydos*. One might easily dismiss the whole matter in saying that by the time he was writing his second Turkish Tale, the influence of *Vathek* had completely subsided. But although the language of *The Bride of Abydos* appears for the most part to escape Beckford's influence, the plot, unlike that of *The Giaour*, seems to have borrowed certain aspects from *Vathek*.

When, in the opening scene of the poem, the pacha Giaffir calls for his daughter, Zuleika, Selim—his brother's son—who had been reared in Giaffir's court and who has the freedom of the harem, confesses that early that morning he intruded on Zuleika's slumber and that together they had gone out into the cypress grove. There they whiled away the time with "Mejnoun's tale, or Sadi's song" until he was summoned to attend Giaffir in the Divan. Zuleika, explains Selim, still wanders in the garden.

'Son of a slave'—the Pacha said—  
'From unbelieving mother bred,  
Vain were a father's hope to see  
Aught that beseems a man in thee.  
Thou, when thine arm should bend the bow,  
And hurl the dart, and curb the steed,  
Thou, Greek in soul if not in creed,  
Must pore where babbling waters flow,  
And watch unfolding roses blow.'<sup>1</sup>

If these are her father's sentiments toward Selim, it is plain from Zuleika's words that she does not echo them:

'Too well I know he loves thee not;  
But is Zuleika's love forgot?'<sup>2</sup>

Turning now to *Vathek*, we find the Caliph enamored of the charms of Nouronihar, daughter of the Emir. A rival appears on the scene,

<sup>8</sup> See above, p. 101.

<sup>9</sup> See above, p. 99, and *Poetry*, iii, 173, ll. 357-8 and n. 1. Henley also includes a note on "Istakhar" and attributes his information to Herbelot. See *Vathek*, 175-6.

<sup>1</sup> *Poetry*, iii, 160-1, ll. 53-89.

<sup>2</sup> *Poetry*, iii, 171, ll. 307-8.

however, a youth named Gulchenrouz. In the short description which introduces Gulchenrouz to the reader, we notice at once that he is strikingly like Selim.<sup>3</sup> The essential situation in both stories is the same. A young boy, raised in his uncle's court, spends most of his time in the harem, playing with his cousin, a beautiful young girl. The two children fall in love and pass many pleasant hours in the garden, reciting poetry and singing songs. It is significant that, in both tales, one of the songs in the repertoire is Sadi's story of Megnoun and Leila. Furthermore, because of this cloistered existence, the boy is unskilled in the attributes becoming the youths of the East—hurling the dart, curbing the steeds, and, for Selim, at least, bending the bow.

There are minor differences, but they do not materially affect our study. The two tales, in the relationship of characters, have too much in common to allow one to dismiss the likenesses arbitrarily. *The Giaour* was written piecemeal from May to November, 1813, and in November Byron composed *The Bride of Abydos* in four nights. In view of this striking resemblance, then, it is logical to assume that he was still under the influence of *Vathek*. The influence had begun to wane, and by the time he wrote *The Corsair* direct connection with Beckford's book had ceased. Its influence appears once more, in a brief recrudescence, in a passage in *The Siege of Corinth*, the last of the Turkish Tales.<sup>4</sup>

### III

THE manner in which Byron used Herbelot is more elusive. Aside from his mention of it together with *Vathek*, he refers to it but twice in the notes to his poems—once in *The Giaour*<sup>5</sup> and once in *The Bride of Abydos*,<sup>6</sup> and as each of these citations has a counterpart in Henley's notes, there is reason to suspect that Byron did not consult Herbelot at all for those entries. Nevertheless, he possessed a copy of the book in his library and could have used it if he wished.<sup>7</sup>

*The Bibliothèque Orientale*, a folio of over nine hundred pages, is in essence no more than an encyclopedia of Oriental proper names. Many of the names which Byron uses in the Turkish Tales—such as Hassan, Leila, Giaffir, Selim, Giamschid, Istakar, Sadi, Megnoun, Zuleika, and others—may be found listed there, but the accounts following the list-

<sup>3</sup> *Vathek*, 85-6.

<sup>4</sup> *Poetry*, III, 478, ll. 643-8 and note.

<sup>5</sup> See above, p. 99.

<sup>6</sup> *Poetry*, III, 173, n. 1: "The treasures of the Pre-Adamite Sultans. See D'Herbelot, article Istakar." Also see above, p. 102, n. 9

<sup>7</sup> Item 191 in 1816 sale catalogue.

ing contain nothing which has any direct bearing on Byron's use of them. In general, they are all so common to Oriental history and fiction that they may be regarded as the common property of any one at all versed in Eastern traditions. In one instance, however, an entry in Herbelot catches our eye:

Zolaikha ou Zuleikha C'est le nom que les Arabes & autres Musulmans donnent à la femme de Putiphar L'amour désordonné que cette femme eut pour le Patriarche Joseph est assez connu par les Livres saints.

Les Musulmans l'ont aussi fort connu, à cause d'un Chapitre de l'Alcoran sous le titre de *Joseph*, dans lequel il est beaucoup parlé de ses emportements *Nadhami* ou *Nezami*, un des plus illustres Poètes parmi les Persans, a composé un Roman fort célèbre, intitulé *Ioussouf u Zuleikha*, en vers Persiens, & a été suivi par Giama, & plusieurs autres Les Turcs ont imité les Persans, & il y a plusieurs Ouvrages de leur façon sur le même sujet.

Il est bon de remarquer ici que les Orientaux, & principalement les Musulmans, se servent souvent des exemples de ces deux amants, aussi-bien que de celui de *Meg'noun* & de *Leileh*, lorsqu'ils parlent non-seulement de l'amour naturel & humain, mais aussi lorsqu'ils s'élèvent jusqu'à celui qui est surnaturel & divin.<sup>8</sup>

A cross-reference to the Oriental treatment of the Joseph-Zuleika story also appears in Herbelot under the article on Meg'noun.<sup>9</sup>

In what does the significance of this entry consist? Simply, that although most of the other Eastern names used by Byron in the Turkish Tales are quite conventional, Zuleika is uncommon, and the only other place in which I have found it—that is, among the books we know Byron read—is in the works of Sir William Jones.<sup>1</sup> It is, of course, impossible, with lack of evidence, to determine the exact source from which Byron took it. He had originally intended it as the title of the poem,<sup>2</sup> and the only clue to its origin appears in Byron's reply to a letter from Murray in November, 1813.

Murray had questioned the propriety of Selim's allusion to Cain,<sup>3</sup> and Byron had promptly answered:

Do you suppose that no one but the Galileans are acquainted with *Adam*, and *Eve*, and *Cain*, and *Noah*?—Surely, I might have had Solomon, and

<sup>8</sup> Herbelot, 926

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, 579-80

<sup>1</sup> *The Works of Sir William Jones*, ed Lord Teignmouth, 13 vols. (London, 1807), III, 315, 324, 369, XI, 418 To be referred to hereafter as *Jones*.

<sup>2</sup> "Last night I finished 'Zuleika,' my second Turkish Tale" *L & J*, II, 314

<sup>3</sup> *Poetry*, III, 187, l 686.

Abraham, and David, and even Moses, or the other When you know that *Zuleika* is the *Persian poetical* name for *Pouphe's* wife, on whom and Joseph there is a long poem in the Persian, this will not surprise you. If you want authority look at Jones, D'Herbelot, *Vathek*, or the notes to the *Arabian Nights*, and, if you think it necessary, model this into a note <sup>4</sup>

Apparently uneasy about this questioning of his accuracy, however, he prepared a note for this passage and sent it on to Murray the following day:

I send you a note for the *ignorant* but I really wonder at finding you among them I don't care one lump of Sugar for my *poetry*, but for my *costume*, and my *correctness* on those points (of which I think the *funeral* was a proof), I will combat lustily <sup>5</sup>

Although Byron cites Jones, *Vathek*, and the notes to the *Arabian Nights* as well as Herbelot as corroborative sources for his information, I have already stated that, save for Jones, the other books do not mention Zuleika.<sup>6</sup> Jones merely lists the names of Zuleika and Joseph, but refrains from comment Byron's letter and note are strongly reminiscent of the entry quoted from the *Bibliothèque Orientale* It seems then that he consulted the book at least once during the composition of *The Bride of Abydos* Whether or not he used it for other problems, whether he had it in readiness as a hasty reference book, or whether he was led to it solely by Henley, it is not in our power to say In at least a small way it made its contribution to the Turkish Tales as they finally appeared.

#### IV

In the course of presenting evidence for Byron's use of Herbelot, the quotation from Byron's letters brought two more possible source books within the horizon of this study,—the works of Sir William Jones and the *Arabian Nights*

It is possible, as we have seen, that Byron first encountered the name *Zuleika* in the works of Jones Did he find anything else there which proved useful to him in his poetry?

Aside from the letter to Murray,<sup>7</sup> direct mention of Jones by Byron

<sup>4</sup> *L & J*, II, 282-3

<sup>5</sup> *L & J*, II, 283 For the note, see *Poetry* III, 187 n 1

<sup>6</sup> They contain, however, evidence which supports the other contentions made in his letter—namely, that the Mohammedans were fully informed concerning the famous Biblical characters of the Old Testament See below, p 113

<sup>7</sup> See above



occurs in only one other place—the 1807 list of his reading. There, among biographies cited, is “Teignmouth’s Sir William Jones.”<sup>8</sup> Since Lord Teignmouth had edited the complete works of Jones in 1799, in addition to writing the biography, which is merely part of the first volume, and since Jones was the greatest Orientalist of his time, it seems that Byron must have been familiar with more than the mere account of his life, even though he is silent on the subject in 1807. At least, it is evident that by 1813 he had read more of Jones, but the letter to Murray is singularly unsatisfactory in disclosing the extent of his knowledge of Jones’s work.

Byron never actually acknowledged Jones’s usefulness. Nevertheless, it seems reasonable that one who had read “all travels or histories or books upon the East” would certainly have known the Teignmouth edition. Hoping to find something in the books which would substantiate this assumption, I examined them with care.

The thirteen volumes comprise a collection of varied materials. There are many things to interest a student of Eastern traditions, and countless passages which undoubtedly would have fascinated Byron, but almost nothing there is directly connected with the Turkish Tales. The wealth of information is unmistakable, and even if Byron used it, as he did with many other books, merely in order to extend his general knowledge of the East, he must unconsciously have absorbed some of the “costume” of the Orient contained in it. For, in his translations, Jones introduced many Eastern images into English for the first time, and if in his pages Byron first encountered the name *Zuleika*, it is also possible that there he first learned of the love of the nightingale for the rose. When, in the famous opening lines of *The Bride of Abydos*, the light wings of Zephyr “wax faint o’er the gardens of Gul in her bloom,”<sup>9</sup> might not the poet there be employing the Persian word *gul* for *rose* as he had first seen it in Jones’s grammar?<sup>1</sup> Following the declension of *gul* in Jones is a paradigm for *bulbul*,<sup>2</sup> the nightingale, followed by a translation from Hafiz, the poet: “O Hafiz, thou desirest, like the

<sup>8</sup> Moore, i, 95–101.

<sup>9</sup> Poetry, iii, 157, l. 8.

<sup>1</sup> Jones, iii, 203.

<sup>2</sup> It is evident that all critics did not praise Byron for his use of Eastern words transliterated. An anonymous reviewer of William Herbert’s *Helga*, in the *Edinburgh Review*, xlix, for June, 1815, says: “We do not think it absolutely necessary that everyone should follow up the example of the Noble author, to whose poems Meninsky’s ‘Lexicon Arabico-Persico-Turcicum’ forms an indispensable appendage; and who listens to the *bulbul*, when Christian folks would have been better pleased with the strains of the nightingale.”

nightingales, the presence of the rose." <sup>3</sup> This legendary liaison is mentioned hundreds of times throughout the volumes, and although Byron encountered it elsewhere, he could scarcely have missed it in Jones.

In his annotation for a passage in *The Giaour*, E. H. Coleridge suggests that Byron had used Jones's Persian grammar:

The lonely Spider's thin gray pall  
Waves slowly widening o'er the wall;  
The Bat builds in his Haram bower,  
And in the fortress of his power  
The Owl usurps the beacon-tower.<sup>4</sup>

For Jones translates from the Persian: "The spider holds the veil in the palace of Caesar; the owl stands sentinel on the watch-tower of Afrasiab." <sup>5</sup>

The most cursory glance through the pages of Jones reveals frequent mention of the Persian poets, Ferdousi, Sadi, and Hafiz together with occasional translations of fragments from Sadi and Hafiz. As shown above, Byron had referred to this celebrated trio in 1807. For convenience, I repeat his reference:

*Persia*.—Ferdousi, author of the Shah Nameh, the Persian Iliad—Sadi, and Hafiz, the immortal Hafiz, the Oriental Anacreon. The last is revered beyond any bard of ancient or modern times by the Persians, who resort to his tomb near Shiraz, to celebrate his memory. A splendid copy of his works is chained to his monument.<sup>6</sup>

At the completion of this list he notes:

This brief list of poets I have written down from memory, without any book of reference; consequently some errors may occur, but I think, if any, very trivial. The works of the European, *and some of the Asiatic*, I have perused, either in the original or translations.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Jones, III, 203-4

<sup>4</sup> Poetry, III, 99-100, ll 290-4, and note Coleridge also points out that in this same passage may be found echoes of Ossian

<sup>5</sup> Jones, III, 289 It is likely that Byron saw these lines in *Cantemir* also, p 102 and note, where they are discussed at length Cantemir mentions the bats as well as the owls

<sup>6</sup> Byron repeats these remarks in a note to *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*: "What would be the sentiments of the Persian Anacreon, Hafiz, could he rise from his splendid sepulchre at Sheeraz (where he reposes with *Ferdousi* and *Sadi*, the oriental Homer and Catullus), and behold his name assumed by one *Stott* of *Dromore*, the most impudent and execrable of literary poachers for the Daily Prints" *Poetry*, I, 352 n. 3.

<sup>7</sup> Moore, I, 95-101. Italics mine.

How many of the Asiatic compositions had he actually read? Jones prints several poems in the original Persian. But Byron knew no Persian, save possibly an occasional word which he may have acquired from Jones's grammar. Did he, for that matter, know any of the Eastern languages? On this subject a note, scribbled by him in 1821 in his collection of "Detached Thoughts," proves to be pertinent to the inquiry and of interest

I sometimes wish that I had studied languages with more attention: those which I know, even the classical (Greek and Latin, in the usual proportion of a sixth form boy), and a smattering of modern Greek, the Armenian and Arabic Alphabets, a few Turkish and Albanian phrases, oaths, or requests, Italian tolerably, Spanish less than tolerably, French to read with ease but speak with difficulty—or rather not at all—all have been acquired by ear or eye, and never by anything like study <sup>a</sup>

From this it is clear that if Byron read any of the Eastern poetry in Jones, it was in translation and not in the original language. The only complete translations of any bulk that Jones published were his versions of the Arabic *Moallakat* and the Sanskrit *Hitopadesa* and *Sakuntala*. It is not to these that Byron alludes, but to Ferdausi's *Shah Nameh* and to Hafiz and Sadi. A handful of short verses from Hafiz and Sadi appears scattered through the pages of the thirteen volumes, but so inconsiderable a number that a reading of them scarcely qualifies one to pass judgment on the merits of the authors. Where then had Byron familiarized himself with these poets?

The only existing translations of either Ferdausi or Sadi which might have been read by Byron by 1807 are never mentioned in his works and it is doubtful that he ever saw them <sup>b</sup>. And, to my knowledge, save for the passages translated by Jones, Hafiz had not been done into English at all. Our suspicions grow stronger when we notice a passage in a letter to Moore in 1813 wherein Byron urges his friend to stop writing short pieces long enough to give to the world a greater work—one "beautiful, I allow, and quite *alone* in our language, but still giving

<sup>a</sup> *L & J*, v, 436, No 55

<sup>b</sup> Joseph Champion, *The Poems of Ferdosi*, 1785

Stephen Sullivan, *Select Fables from Gulistan*, 1774

Francis Gladwin, *Persian Classics*, Vol I, "The Gulistan of Sady, with an English translation" Vol II, "The Gulistan of Sady, with notes" (Calcutta, 1806).

—— [The *Pand Nama* of Sadi] *A Compendium of Ethics*, 1788

John Herbert Harrington, *The Persian and Arabic Works of Sadi*, 2 vols, 1791–5. Only the introduction is in English and that contains but three short epistles of Sadi in translation

us a right to expect a *Shah Nameh* (is that the name?) as well as gazelles." <sup>1</sup>

It is possible that Byron is merely verifying the orthography here, but that seems unlikely. Perhaps he is jesting, but there again the jest falls rather flat. If he had ever read the *Shah Nameh*, he would never have forgotten the name!

The matter may be brought to a close by examining Jones once more. In a preface to a section entitled "Poems, consisting chiefly of Translations from the Asiatic Languages," wherein he discusses poems which deserved to be translated but which had not yet appeared in any European language, Jones says:

The heroic poem of *Ferdusi* might be versified as easily as the *Iliad*, and I see no reason why *the delivery of Persia by Cyrus* should not be a subject as interesting to us, as *the anger of Achilles*, or *the Wandering of Ulysses*. The Odes of Hafez, and of Mesihî would suit our lyric measures as well as those ascribed to Anacreon <sup>2</sup>

Once again in the same volume, in an essay on the poetry of the Eastern nations, Jones compares the *Shah Nameh* to the *Iliad* and Hafiz to Anacreon,<sup>3</sup> and in another volume, the comparisons appear in an essay he had written in French on Oriental poetry.<sup>4</sup>

Byron's use of these same comparisons suggests Jones as the source of his information concerning the Persian poets. In all probability he had not read the poems themselves, but had read what Jones had to say about Eastern poetry and forthwith accepted the scholar's critiques as his own. Consequently, one may safely infer that whereas Byron *may* have first encountered certain Oriental images or names in Jones's work, it was there that he found the fashionable epithets to affix to the names of the Persian poets whose work he professed to know. When we find him saying that he had perused some of the Asiatic works "either in the original or translations," we feel free to substitute "none in the original and few in translation."

## V

THE "few in translation" consisted of the fragments of Sadi and Hafiz published by Jones, a group of miscellaneous short pieces also scat-

<sup>1</sup> *L & J*, II, 254-5.

<sup>2</sup> *Jones*, viii, 204.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 354-5, 357.

<sup>4</sup> *Jones*, x, 197-207, 218.

tered through the volumes of Jones, and most probably the Arabian classics, the *Koran* and the *Arabian Nights*.

The earliest direct mention of the *Koran* made by Byron occurs in the 1807 list,<sup>6</sup> but since we have already seen, in respect to the Persian poets, that his statements there are not wholly to be trusted, it is unwise to assume that he is speaking with first-hand acquaintance of the book. To be sure, he could have read it by that time, for it had been translated into English in 1734 by George Sale and a fourth edition of Sale's translation was issued in 1801.<sup>6</sup> In the notes to *Vathek*, Henley alludes to the *Koran* frequently, also mentioning Sale's Preliminary Discourse, which had been prefixed to the original edition of 1734 and all reprints, designed to provide the reader with "the most material particulars proper to be known previously to the entering on the *Koran* itself." Once again we are faced with the problem of the sources of Byron's information. Was he familiar with Sale directly or did he only know of it at second-hand from such writers as Henley?

A note to *The Giaour* may help to determine our conclusions:

Monkir and Nekir are the inquisitors of the dead, before whom the corpse undergoes a slight noviciate and preparatory training for damnation. If the answers are none of the clearest, he is hauled up with a scythe and thumped down with a red-hot mace till properly seasoned, with a variety of subsidiary probations. The office of these angels is no sinecure; there are but two, and the number of orthodox deceased being in a small proportion to the remainder, their hands are always full.—See *Relig. Ceremon.*, v. 290; vii. 59, 68, 118, and Sale's *Preliminary Discourse to the Koran*, p. 101.<sup>7</sup>

Henley had written:

*Monker and Nakir*. These are two black angels of a tremendous appearance, who examine the departed on the subject of his faith; by whom if he give not a satisfactory account, he is sure to be cudgelled with maces of red-hot iron, and tormented more variously than words can describe. *Relig. Ceremon.* vol. vii. pp. 59, 68, 118; vol. v. p. 290; Sale's Prelim. Disc. p. 101, and one of the MSS. specified in the preface.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> See above, p. 92, note 6.

<sup>6</sup> The first translation of the *Koran* into a European language was the French version of Andre Du Ryer in 1649. Du Ryer's text was translated into English that same year by Alexander Ross. Both of these versions were inaccurate and badly written.

<sup>7</sup> *Poetry*, iii, 121, n. 1. The book referred to here, in addition to Sale, is: Bernard Picart, *The Ceremonies and Religious Customs of the . . . Nations of the known World*, 7 vols., London, 1731-9.

<sup>8</sup> *Vathek*, 237.

Inasmuch as the passage in Sale<sup>9</sup> does not correspond as closely to Byron's note as that in Henley, and since the references are exactly the same in both Byron's and Henley's notes, the burden of the proof that he had actually consulted Sale seems to rest with Byron. He never alludes to Sale again, although he does mention the *Koran*; but, since he did not read Arabic and since there were no better translations, if he consulted any edition of the *Koran*, it was probably Sale's. Elsewhere in *The Giaour*, Byron writes a note for the use of the word *Bismillah*—"In the name of God; the commencement of all the chapters of the Koran but one, and of prayer and thanksgiving"<sup>1</sup>—an observation which might have been made after reading the *Koran*,<sup>2</sup> but also one which might have been suggested again by Henley's note.<sup>3</sup>

Another note from the same poem also mentions the *Koran*. In versifying the conventional belief that the paradise of the Moslems excludes all mortal women, substituting for them the alluring Hours of celestial origin, Byron writes:

A vulgar error the Koran allots at least a third of Paradise to well-behaved women; but by far the greater number of Mussulmans interpret the text their own way, and exclude their moieties from heaven. Being enemies to Platonics, they cannot discern 'any fitness of things' in the souls of the other sex, conceiving them to be superseded by Hours.<sup>4</sup>

This passage has no counterpart in Henley's notes, but it does have a possible source in Sale's Preliminary Discourse:

Before we quit this subject, it may not be improper to observe the falsehood of a vulgar imputation on the *Mohammedans*, who are by several writers reported to hold that women have no souls, or, if they have, that they will perish, like those of brute beasts, and will not be rewarded in the next life. But whatever may be the opinion of some ignorant people among them, it is certain that *Mohammed* had too great a respect for the fair sex to teach such a doctrine; and there are several passages in the *Koran* which

<sup>9</sup> *The Koran*, ed George Sale (London, 1734), p 76 This, of course, does not correspond to the pagination cited by Henley and Byron If the reference is correct in Henley, he was using a reprint and not the 1734 edition, the only text available to me.

<sup>1</sup> *Poetry*, III, 113 n 2

<sup>2</sup> Especially Sale's "Preliminary Discourse," *Koran*, 59 "Next after the title, at the head of every chapter, except only the ninth, is prefixed the following solemn form, by the *Mohammedans* called the *Bismillah*, IN THE NAME OF THE MOST MERCIFUL GOD; which form they constantly place at the beginning of all their books and writings in general, as a peculiar mark or distinguishing characteristic of their religion, it being counted a sort of impiety to omit it"

<sup>3</sup> *Vashek*, 203

<sup>4</sup> *Poetry*, III, 110 n. 1.

affirm that women, in the next life, will not only be punished for their evil actions, but will also receive the rewards of their good deeds, as well as the men, and that in this case God will make no distinction of sexes. It is true, the general notion is, that they will not be admitted into the same abode as the men are, because their places will be supplied by the paradisiacal females.<sup>5</sup>

Byron's note here seems to be, for the most part, a simplified statement of the information furnished by Sale, even to the carrying over of the epithet *vulgar* as applied to the general belief. This extract is somewhat reassuring, for it implies that Byron had really read Sale's *Discourse* and possibly the text of the *Koran* itself. Two more allusions to the *Koran* appear in the poems. When, in *The Bride of Abydos*, Byron mentions Zuleika's amulet, engraved with the Koorsee text, he notes

The belief in amulets engraved on gems, or enclosed in gold boxes, containing scraps from the Koran, worn round the neck, wrist, or arm, is still universal in the East. The Koorsee (throne) verse in the second cap. of the Koran describes the attributes of the Most High, and is engraved in this manner, and worn by the pious, as the most esteemed and sublime of all sentences.<sup>6</sup>

The other allusion occurs in the text of the same poem, when, in describing the funeral of Zuleika, the mourners are termed "the Koran-chanters of the Hymn of Fate."<sup>7</sup> Henley is silent on these two customs, and there is no place in Sale's *Discourse* or in the *Koran* itself which might have prompted Byron to refer to them. Widespread as they were, he may have noticed them while traveling through the East. His reference to the second chapter of the *Koran* for the Koorsee, or Throne verse is correct, however.<sup>8</sup>

At best we may only conjecture. Byron may have skimmed the book lightly prior to 1807; he may have read it carefully in his youth; or, as with Ferdausi and Hafiz, he may merely have alluded to it after reading what others had said about it. If he had not read it before 1807, it was still available to him during the composition of the poems, and Henley's references to Sale's edition may have prompted him to consult it.

<sup>5</sup> *Koran*, 102-3. Where Byron derived his notion of the allotment of a "third" of paradise to the women, I have not discovered.

<sup>6</sup> *Poetry*, III, 181 n. 3.

<sup>7</sup> *Poetry*, III, 206, l. 1111.

<sup>8</sup> *Koran*, 30.

## VI

HAVING been unable to trace the original of the note on the Koorsee text to Sale or Henley, I ran across it in the notes to Jonathan Scott's edition of the *Arabian Nights*:

The koorsee or throne is the appellation given to the following passage of the second chapter of the Koraun, and being esteemed by its followers as most sublime is frequently recited in their prayers, and engraven on agate, emerald, or other precious stones, worn as an arm bracelet by rich devotees.<sup>9</sup>

The parallelism is too clear to be insignificant. Byron had Scott's edition of the *Arabian Nights* in his library,<sup>1</sup> and this extract confirms his use of it. Furthermore, he had also sent Murray to the "notes to the Arabian Nights," as well as to *Vathek* and to Jones, to prove that the Mohammedans were acquainted with the chief legendary figures of the Old Testament.<sup>2</sup> If Murray pursued Byron's direction to the letter, however, he must have gone on a wild-goose chase, for the notes to the *Arabian Nights* are silent on that particular subject. But the introductory discourse with which Scott prefaced his edition of the tales does substantiate Byron's claim.

The Moosulmauns are taught in the Koraun that God has made revelations of his will to various prophets in writing, all of which it is requisite to believe. The whole of the sacred books are said to be one hundred and four, of which ten were given to Adam, fifty to Seth, thirty to Idrees or Enoch, ten to Abraham, and the other four, being the Pentateuch, the Psalms, the Gospel, and the Koraun, were delivered to Moses, David, Jesus Christ, and Mahummud, whose revelation being the seal of prophecy and mission, no other dispensation will be made. All the divine books, except the four last, the Moosulmauns believe to be entirely lost.<sup>3</sup>

That Byron should have confused the notes with the introduction is understandable, for he apparently wrote the letter to Murray without consulting the book itself. Scott's notes are few in number, confined to approximately twenty pages in the last volume of his edition, whereas his introduction, containing a general account of the religion, manners,

<sup>9</sup> *Arabian Nights*, vi, 426 n. 60

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 91 note

<sup>2</sup> See above, p. 104. The other English editions of the *Arabian Nights* contained no notes, and since Byron possessed Scott's it is reasonable to assume that he referred specifically to it.

<sup>3</sup> *Arabian Nights*, i, iv-v.



and customs of the Mohammedans, occupies almost a quarter of the first volume.

These items serve merely to suggest that, during the composition of the poems, Byron intermittently referred to Scott's edition, for he never mentions Scott directly. This is thoroughly in keeping with his failure, save in one or two instances, to allude to the books he had consulted.

We know that Byron says that he read the *Arabian Nights* before he was ten years old and there is little point in doubting him. Nothing in his wide reading of books dealing with the East seems more natural than that as a child he should have discovered the book that had been almost universally read throughout England in the eighteenth century.<sup>4</sup> Nor is it odd that its contents should have started him on a career of reading which prompted him to grasp eagerly any volume concerned with the East. All this we accept complacently and then we look for more. We begin to turn over the pages of the tales, searching for the originals and analogues of the Turkish Tales, and encounter nothing but disappointment. The tales are quite unlike those of Byron, and we are forced to conclude that although the *Arabian Nights* awakened in Byron the desire to read and learn more about the East, they played no greater part in his literary career. Once in a letter he demonstrates his knowledge of the tales by alluding to an incident in one of them,<sup>5</sup> and, as for the Turkish Tales themselves, four lines in *The Giaour* owe their origin to another incident.<sup>6</sup>

Obviously this is meager evidence, but other parallels are lacking. If, then, we are to find that Scott's edition of the *Arabian Nights* had any immediate effect upon Byron's poems, other than that in the two excerpts already given, we shall have to examine the introduction to the tales rather than the tales themselves.

Up to this point, these observations upon Byron's reading have been, in a sense, homogeneous. Since an attempt to interpret his use of Scott's introduction presents us with a broader, less specific type of borrowing, it is advisable here to correlate the materials examined thus far. It should be noticed that all the books treated above have been mentioned by Byron himself in direct connection with his Turkish Tales, and that they were regarded by the poet as books of reference. Slight as his mention of them may have been, he at least acknowledged having used,

<sup>4</sup> The first English translation of Galland's French version of the *Arabian Nights* had gone through 18 editions by 1793

<sup>5</sup> *L & J*, III, 39-40

<sup>6</sup> *Poetry*, III, 98, ll 269-72, also, Samuel Smiles, *Memoirs and Correspondence of the Late John Murray* (1891), I, 219, note

at one time or another, *Vathek*, Herbelot's *Bibliothèque Orientale*, the works of Sir William Jones, the *Koran*, and the *Arabian Nights*. *Vathek*, because of its spurious Orientalism, seems to be a misfit in this group, but Byron's greatest debt is to the notes, which were carefully prepared from the best Oriental source books, rather than to the tale itself, the product of Beckford's wild fancies. Moreover, in its patent superiority to other pseudo Oriental tales of its time, it has a mark in common with the other books in the group. Whereas Byron's list of quoted authorities is meager in extent, its quality is high. It includes the collected works of the greatest Oriental scholar of the period, the two most celebrated examples of Arabian literature,—both the "Bible" and the artistic legendary stories of the Mohammedans—a masterful encyclopedia of Oriental nomenclature, and the most prominent English imitation of the Oriental tale—in short, a small but eminently respectable library of reference books.

## VII

IN addition to the books discussed in the foregoing sections, Byron had read many other volumes which treated similar subjects. Such books provided the foundation upon which all his knowledge of the East was built, although, often, the mark which they left upon the poetry is slight.

I suggested that Jonathan Scott's *Introduction* to the *Arabian Nights* may have influenced the poems of Byron although the tales did not. The general content of this essay has been mentioned—it attempts to sketch briefly the religion, manners, and customs of the Mohammedans in order to furnish the reader with a knowledge of Eastern traditions, as an aid to his comprehension of the tales. This it did, more effectively than Sale's *Preliminary Discourse* which it resembles in purpose;<sup>7</sup> it presents a preface for the layman rather than the scholar, while it strives simultaneously for authenticity and accuracy.

Byron must have read Scott's *Introduction* shortly before he wrote the *Turkish Tales*, for it did not appear until 1811 and the book was still in his library in 1816. Consequently, portions of it could easily have been fresh in his mind while he was writing the poems and the first example of borrowing which I shall present is specific.

In the letter to Murray, already quoted, in which Byron enclosed the

<sup>7</sup> Scott acknowledges his indebtedness to Sale and to Dr Patrick Russell's *Natural History of Aleppo* (Scott's *Introduction*, 11). There is no evidence that Byron was familiar with Russell's book except through the knowledge of it acquired by reading Scott's preface.

"note for the ignorant," it is necessary to notice especially a remark enclosed in parenthesis: ". . . but for my *costume*, and my *correctness* on those points (of which I think the *funeral* was a proof), I will combat lustily."<sup>8</sup>

The funeral to which Byron refers occurs near the end of *The Bride of Abydos*. Zuleika, unable to endure separation from Selim, dies of a broken heart even before her father's bullet had put an end to her lover's life. Loud is the mourning as the last rites are prepared for her:

By Helle's stream there is a voice of wail!  
And Woman's eye is wet—Man's cheek is pale:  
Zuleika! last of Giaffir's race,  
Thy destined lord is come too late:  
He sees not—ne'er shall see thy face!  
Can he not hear  
The loud Wul-wulleh warn his distant ear?  
Thy handmaids weeping at the gate,  
The Koran-chanters of the Hymn of Fate,  
Sighs in the hall, and shrieks upon the gale,  
Tell him thy tale!<sup>9</sup>

Byron was justified in combatting lustily in defense of his correctness, if the source of his information were authentic. He had digested his reading thoroughly:

At the instant of expiration, the women who may be present give the alarm, and are soon joined by all the females of the family in a loud chorus of lamentation, which is called wullwulleh: in this the men take no share, but assume a resigned silence, and retire to sorrow in private. Some of the near female relations and friends, upon hearing of a death, repair to the house, and the wullwulleh is renewed upon the entrance of each visitant into the harem. . . .

. . . A number of the officiators at the mosques, carrying tattered banners, walk first, incessantly repeating Allah, Allah! that is, God is God, in a sort of chaunt; next comes the bier, surrounded by others of the above description, who, in a loud voice, chaunt certain appropriate verses of the Koraun.<sup>1</sup>

Nowhere else in the books Byron used do we find a description of a funeral so like Zuleika's, nor is there any indication in the recollections

<sup>8</sup> See above, p. 105.

<sup>9</sup> *Poetry*, iii, 205-6, ll. 1103-14.

<sup>1</sup> Scott's *Introduction*, lxxxiii-v. Here, too, are the "Koran-chanters" mentioned above. See p. 112.

of his travels that he had actually witnessed one like it. Moreover, no other description in Scott's *Introduction* bears such close resemblance to Byron's poetry. Scott mentions several Eastern customs, however, which immediately suggest other passages in the poems where Byron had introduced his knowledge of Oriental manners and conventions. A few of these parallels will suffice.

Scott's description of the fast of the month of Ramadan, the Turkish Lent, which is followed by the three-day feast, the Bairam,<sup>2</sup> brings to mind the opening scene of *The Giaour*; but Byron knew of the Ramadan and the Bairam from his own travels, and he also knew that Mohammedans were a temperate race. Nevertheless, Scott informs us that persons of rank occasionally drank wine in private and punished the middling or lower classes who indulged similar desires.<sup>3</sup> So Byron's pacha, in *The Corsair*, drinks wine while his underlings must content themselves with coffee:

Forbidden draughts, 'tis said he dared to quaff  
Though to the rest the sober berry's juice  
The slaves bear round for rigid Moslem's use.<sup>4</sup>

The education of children in the East is treated at some length by Scott:

The children of Moosulmauns of high rank are educated at home under private tutors; hence they are taught to read and write, with arithmetic; also to ride, and military exercises. The Koraun, its commentaries by the divines of their parents' sect, the works of favourite poets, with those of some few ethical writers and historians, are generally the whole of their studies.<sup>5</sup>

This, of course, with its mention of riding and military exercise, applies chiefly to men. Moreover, says Scott, "Dr. Russell assures us that boys have free access to the haram till sixteen or seventeen."<sup>6</sup> There is, in addition, a passage on the education of women of the upper classes: "They are taught when young to read and sometimes to write the Arabic, but are very apt to neglect both, so that reading is not a common female amusement, and is never a study."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Scott's *Introduction*, xv-vi.

<sup>3</sup> Scott's *Introduction*, xiii-iv.

<sup>4</sup> *Poetry*, III, 250, ll. 638-40.

<sup>5</sup> Scott's *Introduction*, xxiii.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, lxxv

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, lxxiii.

These passages are of interest to us when we recall that Selim, in *The Bride of Abydos*, had free access to the harem,<sup>8</sup> that he was denied the usual privileges of learning to ride and to engage in military exercises,<sup>9</sup> and that Zuleika, his cousin, was one of the privileged young ladies who had learned to read—a veritable Turkish bluestocking, that is, if the objects found in her bedchamber are deemed tokens of such habits:

And by her Comboloio lies  
A Koran of illumined dyes;  
And many a bright emblazoned rhyme  
By Persian scribes redeemed from time<sup>1</sup>

Scott's description of the game in which horsemen dexterously hurl darts, called jerreeds, at one another with incredible speed,<sup>2</sup> calls to mind the scene in *The Bride of Abydos* when Giaffir goes forth with his Maugrabees, Mamelukes, and Delis

To witness many an active deed  
With sabre keen, or blunt jerreed.<sup>3</sup>

The continued belief of the Moslems in magic and sorcery prompts them to guard against the influence of evil eyes by talismans and amulets.<sup>4</sup> And even though the Giaour's glance is cast down, the narrator observes that he is possessed with an "evil eye,"<sup>5</sup> while guarded against such injurious omens, Zuleika, in her hurry to keep her mid-night tryst with Selim, carelessly forgets to take along "her mother's sainted amulet!"<sup>6</sup>

Finally, when Scott states that "Moosulmauns and Christians seldom or ever associate but in the artificial characters of life," we are aware that the failure to observe that tradition resulted in tragedy for Leila, the Mohammedan, who gave her love to a Christian.<sup>7</sup>

This, then, is the broader, less specific type of borrowing. Byron was sufficiently well informed on all of these subjects to have written as he

<sup>8</sup> *Poetry*, III, 160, ll 66-7

<sup>9</sup> *Poetry*, III, 192, ll 805-6

<sup>1</sup> *Poetry*, III, 181-2, ll 554-7 These lines should be contrasted with Byron's passage on Turkish women in *Beppo* (*Poetry*, IV, 182, stanza lxxii).

<sup>2</sup> Scott's *Introduction*, xviii-ix

<sup>3</sup> *Poetry*, III, 168, ll 237-8; also 161, l 86, and 97, l. 251

<sup>4</sup> Scott's *Introduction*, xxviii-ix.

<sup>5</sup> *Poetry*, III, 95, l 196, also 115, l 612

<sup>6</sup> *Poetry*, III, 181, l 551.

<sup>7</sup> *The Giaour*, *passim*.

did without ever having seen Scott's essay; nor is there reason for supposing that he consulted Knolles and Rycaut, Cantemir, the Baron de Tott, or Lady Mary Wortley Montagu while composing the Turkish Tales. There is no direct connection between the *Turkish History* and the Turkish Tales. But many of the accounts of Oriental life suggest portions of the poems, and I shall select a few examples to strengthen my original contention—that from Byron's early reading sprung the germs of the Orientalisms in his poetry.<sup>8</sup>

Many of the stock subjects which have already been discussed at length in conjunction with the books previously examined are treated by Knolles and Rycaut,<sup>9</sup> but I shall endeavor to avoid needless repetition. Rycaut, in presenting the hierarchy of the Moslem church, has a few words to say about Muftis, Emirs, and Dervishes:

The Mufti is the principal head of the *Mahometan Religion*, or oracle of all doubtful questions in the Law, and is a person of great esteem and reverence amongst the Turks.<sup>1</sup>

The Emirs . . . are of the Race of *Mahomet*, who for distinction sake, wear about their heads Turbants of a deep Sea green, which is the colour of their Prophet.<sup>2</sup>

[The Dervishes] pretend to great Patience, Humility, Modesty, Charity, and Silence, in presence of their Superiors or others; their eyes are always fixed downwards, their heads hanging towards their breast, and their bodies bending forwards.

Their shirts are of the coarsest Linen can be made, with a white Plaid or Mantle about their shoulders but most wear a loose kind of garment made of Wool at *Iconium* or in *Anatolia*, of a dark colour; their caps or what they wear on their heads is like the Crown of a Hat of the largest size, made of a course Felt of a whitish colour.<sup>3</sup>

Byron apparently recognized the esteem in which Muftis were held when, in describing Leila's beauty in *The Giaour*, he wrote:

On her might Muftis gaze, and own  
That through her eye the Immortal shone.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Doubtless he drew upon these recollections later, too, in 1820, when he was writing the Turkish cantos (V—VII) of *Don Juan*.

<sup>9</sup> I refer to such subjects as the fasts of Ramadan, feasts of the Bairam, education of children, and prohibition of wine, etc.

<sup>1</sup> Knolles, II, 51.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 67-8.

<sup>4</sup> *Poetry*, III, 110, ll. 491-2.

The Emir who leads the procession carrying Leila to her untimely death is properly described in the text and notes:

More near—each turban I can scan,  
And silver-sheathed ataghan;  
The foremost of the band is seen  
An Emir by his garb of green.

Green is the privileged colour of the prophet's numerous pretended descendants.<sup>5</sup>

When Conrad, in *The Corsair*, disguises himself as a captive Dervish, escaped from the Pirate's hiding-place, in order to gain entrance to Seyd's banquet hall, he is garbed more or less in traditional style and conducts himself in keeping with his disguise:

His arms were folded on his dark-green vest,  
His step was feeble, and his look deprest;  
Yet worn he seemed of hardship more than years,  
And pale his cheek with penance, not from fears.  
Vowed to his God—his sable locks he wore,  
And these his lofty cap rose proudly o'er:  
Around his form his loose long robe was thrown,  
And wrapt a breast bestowed on heaven alone.<sup>6</sup>

Rycaut's account of the restrictions placed on women in the harems suggests another moment in *The Bride of Abydos*:

The Ladies also of the Seraglio have their faithful keepers of the Black Guard to attend them, and can only have the liberty of enjoying the Air, which passes through Grates and Lattices, unless sometime they obtain licence to sport and recreate themselves in the Garden, separated from the sight of Men, by Walls higher than those of any Nunnery.<sup>7</sup>

—for Selim, lest Giaffir should chide his sister "or her sable guide" confesses that "before the guardian slaves awoke" he and Zuleika had flown to the garden to enjoy the beautiful day and the company of one another.<sup>8</sup>

Knolles is careful to explain the duties of a Turkish official whenever a new one appears on the scene:

The Grand Seignior hath also certain Officers attending on him to the number of three thousand, whom they call *Chiaus*, which are as it were

<sup>5</sup> *Poetry*, III, 103, ll. 353-6 and note.

<sup>6</sup> *Poetry*, III, 251-2, ll. 659-66.

<sup>7</sup> *Knolles*, II, 5.

<sup>8</sup> *Poetry*, III, 160-1, ll. 53-80.

Sergeants at Arms. These are men well esteemed, and are often employed in Embassies to foreign Princes: They also carry Letters and Commendations from the Prince or his chief Visier, and they apprehend Offenders.<sup>9</sup>

Hassan, in *The Giaour*, goes to woo a new bride, having disposed of the faithless Leila. On this mission of state, as is fitting, he is accompanied by a Chiaus.<sup>1</sup>

In view of the high value placed upon sables in our own time, the reader of Knolles and Rycaut can scarcely fail to observe the large number of these expensive furs which were given, as tokens of esteem, by the Turkish dignitaries to their inferiors:

The Great Vizier met his Master at *Iconium* with a moderate Equipage, to give more Room for the Quarters of the Army, and rendring himself more gracious in his Eyes by a Present of fifty thousand Dollars, he was again remunerated with a Cemitar and a Vest of Sables, which are the usual Signals of the Sultan's Favour.<sup>2</sup>

Since sables were distributed with such largesse in Turkey and worn by all members of the upper ranks of society, it is proper to find Zuleika

Wrapt in the darkest sable vest  
Which none save noblest Moslem wear

as she hurries through the woods to meet her lover in the dead of night.<sup>3</sup>

These heterogeneous excerpts from the *Turkish History* serve to show that, on more than one occasion, Byron's poetry is thoroughly consistent with the details of Turkish life and manners as recorded by Knolles and Rycaut. The history does not, however, furnish us with analogues for the stories of the Turkish Tales, but in two places there are passages which bring to mind certain situations in Byron's plots.

The first is suggestive of the basic situation in *The Giaour*:<sup>4</sup>

A Turk having had the Use of a Christian Woman, they are both condemned to dye, unless she will abjure her Faith; the like is observed betwixt a Christian and a Turkish Woman, if they have been found together. Divorce is allowed among them in case of Barrenness and Incontinency.<sup>5</sup>

Leila's chief sin was, of course, in committing adultery with the Giaour, but she heaped insult upon injury by consorting with a Christian—

<sup>9</sup> *Knolles*, ii, 960.

<sup>1</sup> *Poetry*, iii, 113, l. 571.

<sup>2</sup> *Knolles*, ii, 41.

<sup>3</sup> *Poetry*, iii, 182, ll. 569-70.

<sup>4</sup> See above, p. 118.

<sup>5</sup> *Knolles*, ii, 962.



assuring herself of the watery grave which she received and which was no uncommon method of punishment in Turkey, as is shown in Rycaut's description of a mutiny among marine soldiers in 1687:

When these things were quieted, a strict Examination was made into the Cause and Leaders of this Mutiny, of which some were strangled, and about twenty others were put into a Sack, *after their Custom*, and cast into the Sea.<sup>6</sup>

This is relatively trivial, however;<sup>7</sup> the other passage is more striking.

Among the events of the year 1668, Rycaut records the expedition against and capture of Captain Georgio, a famous pirate, whose exploits and career are strongly reminiscent of those of Conrad in *The Corsair*:

But better success had the Turks the next month at Sea against Captain *Georgio*, an old and subtle Pirate, who for many years had vexed and pillaged, not only the Turks, but Christians on all Isles of the Archipelago: great fortune he had in taking Turkish Saiks and Vessels; and some of them considerably rich, and when that prey failed him, or was scarce, he pursued his game on the shore, from whence he often carried men, women, and children into slavery, and oft-times had the fortune of considerable Booty. The Islands which lay open and unguarded were his common Rendezvous, where the men attended his service, and the women his lust. In this manner the Pirate passed for several years, having Obtained unto himself a fame and terror with the Turks, and riches at home: the place which he commonly chose to wash and tallow his Vessels, was amongst certain small Isles in the Bay of *Edremit*, anciently *Adrimetum*, opposite unto *Mytilene*, from whence he had as from a Thicket or Wood a view of such Vessels as passed the great Road towards *Constantinople*: these frequent successes rendered him so confident and secure, that he still continued his station, notwithstanding the Turkish Naval Forces, which in the summer season made their Rendezvous at *Scio*. But at length the Captain-Pasha with the whole Turkish Armata, being at *Scio*, and with him three Ships of *Tripoli*, advice came that Captain *Georgio* had not forsaken his little Isles, but was there careening his small Fleet which consisted of two Ships and a Brigantine . . . [At this point the story proceeds differently from *The Corsair* and *Georgio* is captured.]

The News of this Victory was celebrated with so much the more joy, by how much this person was feared and hated, and was not only a subject of rejoicing to the Turks, but also to the Christians, whose Parents and Relations the Corsaire had pillaged and enslaved; so that the Inhabitants of the *Archipelago* for the most part were pleased with the revenge, and

<sup>6</sup> *Knolles*, iii, 235. Italics mine.

<sup>7</sup> Byron's treatment of this rather grim custom is more amusing in *Don Juan*, Canto V, Stanza xcii.

promised more security and quietness to their open Coasts. With no less triumph was this News posted to the Grand Signior, who rewarded the Messenger with two thousand Dollars gratuity, and caused demonstrations of joy to be made through the whole Court; so dreadful was grown the name of so inconsiderable a person, in respect of the greatness of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>8</sup>

All pirate stories, because of the very nature of the profession of piracy, have certain elements in common, and since both Conrad and Georgio sailed the same seas, there are bound to be perfunctory resemblances.<sup>9</sup> The resemblances are, in this instance, sufficient to merit closer scrutiny.

Conrad is younger than Georgio, but every bit as keen and alert. He too is indiscriminate about his victims:

No matter where—their chief's allotment this;  
Theirs to believe no prey or plan amiss.<sup>1</sup>

He and his men have seized many spoils, but he differs from Georgio in one respect he shuns "the grosser joys of sense" and his evil ways are somewhat tempered by his great love for Medora.

The pirates' isle in *The Corsair* commanded a broad view of the surrounding sea. From it, we are told, the men might

Gaze where some distant sail a speck supplies,  
With all the thirsting eye of Enterprise.<sup>2</sup>

There the men repaired the boats, replacing the helms and oars, or, lying about on the sand in scattered groups, they would game, carouse, or converse quietly. So successful have their ventures been that the name of their chief "on every shore is famed and feared."<sup>3</sup>

Despite the presence of a large number of Turkish galleys in the bay of Coron, assembled there under the leadership of the Pacha Seyd, who is determined to sail out to the pirates' hideout and "drag the fettered Rovers home," Conrad turns the tables on the Pacha by attacking first. At this point, the parallelism between the two stories ceases, although both men are captured—Georgio to be put to death, and Conrad to escape.

<sup>8</sup> *Knolles*, II, 201-2

<sup>9</sup> Here again, Byron carries over his conventional background into *Don Juan* when he describes the life of Haidee's father, the pirate Lambro. See *Don Juan*, Canto III, stanza xiii ff.

<sup>1</sup> *Poetry*, III, 229, ll. 59-60.

<sup>2</sup> *Poetry*, III, 229, ll. 55-6.

<sup>3</sup> *Poetry*, III, 229, ll. 61-2.

It is possible that Byron had never seen the account of Georgio, or that, if he had, he might easily have forgotten it. On the other hand, we know that he read a goodly portion of Knolles and Rycaut, and suspect that he probably had seen the article on Georgio. Together with all the other tales of pirates which Byron encountered in his reading and in his travels, the adventures of Captain Georgio, as described in the history, may have been reduced—in Byron's memory—to a distant but vaguely present impression which took unto itself a more concrete form as he hurriedly wrote the tale of Conrad.

To establish the relationship between the poems and Prince Cantemir's *History of the Growth and Decay of the Othman Empire* without traversing once more the ground just covered would be impossible. Cantemir's book is identical in scope with Knolles and Rycaut, and consequently its subject matter is, to a large degree, the same. It is rich in notes, however, which are, as so often happens, as interesting as the text itself. One of these notes, we have seen, suggests a source for several lines in *The Giaour*.<sup>4</sup> Another, four pages long, describes the Circassians and their beauty, recalling Byron's description of Leila as Circassia's daughter.<sup>5</sup> A third explains the functions of the *Kıslar Ağası*: " . . . (that is the *Chief Eunuch*,) whilst he bears that office over the women in the Seraglio, though great honour is paid him by all, is reckon'd and call'd a slave."<sup>6</sup> Byron, in the introductory lines of *The Giaour*, calls the Greeks "Slaves—nay, the bondsmen of a Slave" and writes a note about the *Kıslar Ağası*.<sup>7</sup>

Further parallels of similar kind would merely increase the bulk of evidence. Its nature would remain unchanged. Byron may be taken at his word when he says that he had read Cantemir's book and it, together with Knolles and Rycaut and the other Turkish histories, doubtless helped him to acquire the thorough grounding in Turkish history and manners which fostered his lasting interest in that subject and led later to his trip to Greece and Constantinople.

There are only a few actual historical allusions in the tales. They are so brief that the source of Byron's information must unquestionably have been his general knowledge acquired from extensive reading on the subject and from inquiry and hearsay on his travels. The three refer-

<sup>4</sup> See above, p. 107, note 5.

<sup>5</sup> *Cantemir*, 126-9, n. and *Poetry*, III, 111, l. 505.

<sup>6</sup> *Cantemir*, 253, note.

<sup>7</sup> *Poetry*, III, 93, l. 151 and note.

ences in *The Bride of Abydos*<sup>8</sup>—to Carasman, Paswan, and Lambro—are to figures either talked about or still living in the Greece of Byron's day, and his notes to these names give the impression that their achievements were subjects of common knowledge.

Aside from the event designated by the title of the poem, the two allusions in *The Siege of Corinth*—to Ali Coumurgı who was present at Corinth and who died at Carlowitz in 1716, and to John Sobieski, the king of Poland who raised the siege of Vienna in 1683<sup>9</sup>—deal with such celebrated events in Turkish history that Byron must have read of them many times. There is no particular quality to his citations which marks them as having proceeded from any one source.

For his authority on the actual siege of Corinth, Byron, in the "Advertisement" prefixed to the poem, refers us to a short paragraph in *A Compleat History of the Turks*, published anonymously in London in 1719.<sup>1</sup> This account is by no means accurate, as E. H. Coleridge points out,<sup>2</sup> but for Byron's design it was adequate. Professor Kolbing, in his excellent edition of the poem, advances rather hesitantly the theory that Byron may have drawn the material for Minotti's great sacrifice from an actual historical event—the siege of Zsigetvar in 1566 when a similar catastrophe befel the Turks—but this conjecture remains unsubstantiated.<sup>3</sup>

The *Compleat History of the Turks* may also be the "more modern history, anonymous" to which Byron refers in the 1807 list,<sup>4</sup> for although it was published prior to Cantemir's volume, it records the events of Turkish history to 1718, whereas Cantemir stops with 1685. Since the greater portion of this history is merely an abridgment of Knolles and Rycaut it need not concern us further. In addition to Hawkins's translation of Mignot's *History of the Turks* (which Byron mentions once)<sup>5</sup> there are doubtless other Turkish histories which Byron saw and which he never mentions.

The memoirs of the Baron de Tott and the letters of Lady Mary

<sup>8</sup> *Poetry*, III, 166, l. 201 and note, 188, l. 702 and note, also 189, ll. 709 ff.; 194, l. 862 and note.

<sup>9</sup> *Poetry*, III, 455 ll. 141–6 and note 2 458, ll. 212–7.

<sup>1</sup> *A Compleat History of the Turks*, 4 vols., London, 1719. Byron's reference is to III, 151.

<sup>2</sup> *Poetry*, III, 441 f.

<sup>3</sup> Lord Byron, *The Siege of Corinth*, ed. Eugen Kolbing (Berlin, 1893), p. xxvii.

<sup>4</sup> See above, p. 91.

<sup>5</sup> Vincent Mignot, *The History of the Turkish, or Ottoman Empire*, trans. A. Hawkins, 4 vols. (London, 1787). See above, p. 91.

Wortley Montagu also appear on Byron's list of books on Eastern subjects which he read as a child.<sup>6</sup>

Tott's memoirs were published in an English translation in 1785, and it is probable that Byron read them in the English rather than the French version. In his preface, the translator speaks disparagingly of Rycaut's history, praises Cantemir, and looks with disfavor upon the highly imaginative picture of Turkey which Lady Mary presents.

Tott seems to strive for informality and realism in his view of Turkey and apparently succeeds in obtaining both. He stresses the monstrous methods of government prevailing in the empire and emphasizes the defects in the social life of its people. Despite these somewhat unusual qualities it is doubtful if Byron was affected by anything other than its conventional aspects. For, in a sense, it contains the inevitable features which he found in other books on Turkey in addition to the Baron's account of contemporary events during his sojourn in Constantinople as aide to the French ambassador.

Tott makes no attempt to present an exhaustive study of the Turks in a systematic way. The procedure of his treatment is purely chronological, and he pauses to describe things as he progresses. Only one entry is of passing interest, not because it relates directly to anything in Byron's poems, but because it inevitably suggests one of his most vivid scenes, the ghastly episode in *The Siege of Corinth* in which Alp, wandering along the beach, sees the lean dogs feeding on the corpses beneath the wall of the city.<sup>7</sup> Tott mentions these vagrant mongrels.<sup>8</sup> Byron asserts that he had witnessed a scene like the one he describes, but he also had read Tott and knew that such a scene was not impossible in Turkey.

It is understandable that the translator of Tott's descriptions of sordid reality should find Lady Mary's letters idealistic in their approach to Eastern conditions.<sup>9</sup> For her own time, however, Lady Mary considered her letters quite truthful and realistic, for we find her writing to Lady Rich on June 17, 1717, from Belgrade Village:

'Tis a particular pleasure to me here, to read the voyages to the Levant, which are generally so far removed from truth, and so full of absurdities,

<sup>6</sup> See above, p. 91. Byron must also have relied upon knowledge of these two books later when he wrote *Don Juan*. See Canto V, stanza xcix, and Canto VI, xxxi; in the latter he refers directly to Tott.

<sup>7</sup> *Poetry*, III, 467-9, ll. 454-78.

<sup>8</sup> Tott, *Memoirs*, I, 246-7.

<sup>9</sup> Tott, *Memoirs*, I, vu.

I am very well diverted with them. They never fail giving you an account of the women, whom, 'tis certain, they never saw, and talking very wisely of the genius of the men, into whose company they are never admitted; and very often describe mosques, which they dare not even peep into.<sup>1</sup>

And in a letter to the Countess of Bristol, she writes:

I could also, with very little trouble, turn over Knolles and Sir Paul Rycaut, to give you a list of Turkish emperors; but I will not tell you what you may find in every author that has writ of this country.<sup>2</sup>

Lady Mary's descriptions of her visits to the harems must have attracted Byron's attention, for these were privileges denied him. In one of the rooms she saw "a sort of couch, raised half a foot, covered with rich silk according to the fancy or magnificence of the owner,"<sup>3</sup> similar to the "silken ottoman" in Zuleika's chamber,<sup>4</sup> and the "three vests of fine sables" which she saw in the Sultana's apartment<sup>5</sup> were probably not very different from that which Zuleika wore.<sup>6</sup>

In describing the Turkish burial customs, she writes:

They set up a pillar, with a carved turban on the top of it, to the memory of a man, and as the turbans, by their different shapes, shew the quality or profession, 'tis in a manner putting up the arms of the deceased; besides, the pillar commonly bears an inscription in gold letters. The ladies have a simple pillar, without other ornament, except those that die unmarried, who have a rose on the top of their monument.<sup>7</sup>

This too is a conventional piece of information to be found in most of the other books which Byron knew, but it is interesting because of the last sentence alluding to the rose on the tombs of unmarried women. A turban marks the spot where Selim is buried, but a living rose blooms over the grave of Zuleika, in *The Bride of Abydos*.<sup>8</sup>

So much, then, for the books which seem to have made the greatest impression upon Byron. No doubt there were others which left their mark upon the poems, but it is improbable that any of them were used for more than a casual reference or two. It is well to mention, in passing, those books which in one way or another treated Eastern life and which Byron may have read in part or as a whole. To some of them he alludes

<sup>1</sup> *Montagu*, II, 287

<sup>2</sup> *Montagu*, III, 2-3

<sup>3</sup> *Montagu*, II, 227.

<sup>4</sup> *Poetry*, III, 181, l. 546.

<sup>5</sup> *Montagu*, II, 310.

<sup>6</sup> *Poetry*, III, 182, l. 569.

<sup>7</sup> *Montagu*, II, 266 f.

<sup>8</sup> *Poetry*, III, 205, l. 1100 and note; 208, ll. 1152 ff.

in his letters or journals; others he mentions in the notes to his poems; a few are suggested as possible sources by E. H. Coleridge; and several more appear in the 1816 sale catalogue of his library.

In the field of general encyclopedias for quick reference on Oriental subjects, it is most probable that Byron consulted Bayle.<sup>9</sup> In 1814, he purchased Moreri as well.<sup>1</sup> It is possible that when referring to the "Encyclopedia" in his letter to Murray in 1813,<sup>2</sup> he means the great work of Diderot, but there is no further evidence that he used that book.<sup>3</sup> The information requested could have been found in Bayle, Moreri, Diderot, or in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.<sup>4</sup> Additional knowledge of a general nature on some aspects of Eastern history might have come from Gibbon.<sup>5</sup>

Byron, in writing to Murray in 1821, requests him to send any new collections of "*Voyages and travels*, provided that they are *neither in Greece, Spain, Asia Minor, Albania, nor Italy* . . . having travelled the countries mentioned, I know that what is said of them can convey nothing further which I desire to know about them."<sup>6</sup> He had, prior to 1816, owned several of the well-known travel books describing the East, including those by Bruce, Chardin, Clarke, Elgin, Prince Eugene, Galt, Gell, Kinneir, and Sonnini.<sup>7</sup> He may also have known something of Dallaway and Tournefort. (See note <sup>8</sup> on opposite page.)

<sup>9</sup> Pierre Bayle, *A general dictionary, historical and critical*, trans. by Bernard, Birch, and Lockman, 10 vols (London, 1734-41) Listed as item 190 in the sale catalogue Also see L & J, III, 73

<sup>1</sup> Louis Moreri, *Le grand dictionnaire historique*, 10 vols, Paris, 1759 Listed as item 373 in the sale catalogue, see also L & J, III, 73 The works of both Bayle and Moreri appear again in the 1827 sale catalogue of Byron's books, which seems to indicate that he found them indispensable as reference books

<sup>2</sup> L & J, II, 298

<sup>3</sup> Denis Diderot, *L'Encyclopedie*, 36 vols (Geneva, 1779)

<sup>4</sup> The third edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* was published in eighteen volumes in Edinburgh, 1797

<sup>5</sup> Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (London, 1807) Listed as item 113 in the sale catalogue

<sup>6</sup> L & J, V, 373

<sup>7</sup> The following books, of those mentioned above, are listed in the 1816 sale catalogue James Bruce, *Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile*, 8 vols, Edinburgh, 1805—item 47, *Voyages du Chevalier Chardin, En Perse, et Autres Lieux de l'Orient*, 10 vols and Atlas, Paris, 1811—item 59, E. D. Clarke, *Travels in Various Countries of Europe, Asia, and Africa*, vols 2 and 3, London, 1812—item 148, W. R. Hamilton, *Memorandum on the subject of the Earl of Elgin's pursuits in Greece*, London, 1811—item 122; *Memours of Prince Eugene of Savoy*, London, 1811—item 97, and *Poetry*, III, 256 and 455; John Galt, *Letters from the Levant*, London, 1813—item 305, Sir John Kinneir, *A Geographical Memoir of the Persian Empire*, London, 1813—item 179, and C. S. Sonnini, *Travels in Upper and Lower Egypt*, London, 1800—item 339

His library contained a history of Persia and another of Greece,<sup>9</sup> and, in the realm of Eastern belles-lettres, he may have been familiar with Castellan, D'Ohsson, Picart, Richardson, and Toderini.<sup>1</sup>

If Byron used his books as indicated in this study, it is at once noticeable that such methods were not unlike those employed by his contemporaries, specifically Southey and Moore. Both these rivals in the field, were, however, completely dependent upon second-hand information for their Oriental materials. Byron's poems were, in every sense of the word, marketable, Southey's, as Byron phrased it, were unsaleable, and *Lalla Rookh* never approached the popularity of *The Corsair*, of which 10,000 copies were sold on the day of publication.<sup>1</sup> Unquestionably other elements contributed to the unprecedented success of the Turkish Tales, but one thing cannot be overlooked—Byron was writing of countries and customs that were familiar to him, and his use of books, though frequently of importance, was at best secondary.

At times he used his sources carefully, elsewhere, the finished product merely suggests previous reading. Occasionally he credits another author with having inspired a passage in his poetry, at other moments he borrows materials without acknowledgement.

His passion for accuracy is more immediately noticeable, and facts which were generally unfamiliar are duly documented and supported. But, as he says, "I could not write upon anything, without some personal experience and foundation."

References in the letters and journals suggest a knowledge of John Galt's *Voyages and Travels*, London, 1812 (L & J, II, 101) and William Gell's *Topography of Troy* London, 1804, *Geography and Antiquities of Ithaca* London, 1807, and *Itinerary of Greece*, London, 1810 (L & J, II, 265 and note). The review of these last two books which appeared in the *Monthly Review* has been erroneously attributed to Byron by E. H. Coleridge and others.

<sup>9</sup> E. H. Coleridge cites, as possible reference books, James Dallaway, *Constantinople Ancient and Modern*, London, 1797 (Poetry, III, 90 n. 3), and Joseph Pitton de Tournefort, *Relation d'un Voyage du Levant* 2 vols., Paris, 1717 (Poetry, III, 121 n. 3).

<sup>1</sup> Sir John Malcolm, *The History of Persia* 2 vols., London, 1815—item 327 in the 1816 sale catalogue, and William Mitford, *The History of Greece*, 10 vols., London, 1795—item 235 in the 1816 sale catalogue.

<sup>1</sup> A. L. Castellan, *Moeurs Usages Costumes des Othmans* 6 vols., Paris, 1812 (L & J, II, 255-6), Mouradja D'Ohsson, *Tableau Generale de l'Empire Ottoman* Paris, 1787 (Poetry, III, 176 n. 1, and 206 n. 1), Bernard Picart, *The Ceremonies and Religious Customs of the Nations of the Known World*, 7 vols. in 6, London, 1731-9 (Poetry, III, 128 n. 1), John Richardson, *A Dictionary, Persian, Arabic, and English*, 2 vols., Oxford, 1777 (item 280 in the sale catalogue, L & J, II, 254, and Poetry, III, 108 n. 1), G. B. Toderini, *De la Littérature des Turcs*, 3 vols. in one, Paris, 1789 (L & J, II, 252, 256).





# Thomas Carlyle and Fiction: 1822–1834

By CARLISLE MOORE

## I

THOUGH it is common knowledge that Carlyle disliked fiction, the nature and extent of his dislike are still in doubt. The failure of his early attempts to write it and his later championship of biography and history have led scholars either to ignore it completely or to dismiss it as an element of his thought which he turned wholly against during the years 1830–32.<sup>1</sup> Certainly his rejection seems to have been a complete one. Few of his mature works are silent on the subject of the hostility between fiction and fact. His vigorous, if not always consistent, animadversions upon novels and poetry are well known. As a Scottish Calvinist he often proclaimed that fiction, in whatever form, was “akin to lying.”<sup>2</sup> As a student of German

<sup>1</sup> On the subject of Carlyle and fiction, Froude says little more than that Carlyle’s “convictions were too intense for fiction.” See J. A. Froude, *Thomas Carlyle, A History of the First Forty Years of His Life, 1795–1835*, 2 volumes in 1 (New York, 1882), ii, 91. Wilson also thinks Carlyle too serious for fiction and dates the change of opinion early in 1832. See D. A. Wilson, *Life of Thomas Carlyle*, 6 volumes (London, 1923–34), ii, 19, 272, 321–2. Roe declares that “with invention in the sense used in imaginative fiction Carlyle had next to no interest” either early or late. See F. W. Roe, *Thomas Carlyle as a Critic of Literature* (New York, 1910), p. 88. Cazamian calls him “lacking in the gifts essential for fiction” but has nothing to say of his opinion. See Louis Cazamian, *Carlyle* (New York, 1932), p. 83. Louise Young, after asserting that history was always for Carlyle the highest literary form of expression, somewhat contradictorily suggests that “had *Wotton Reinfred* not proved so bleak a failure, we should have had a philosophic novel like *Wilhelm Meister* in the place of autobiographic romance” like *Sartor*. See L. M. Young, *Thomas Carlyle and the Art of History* (Philadelphia, 1939), pp. 11, 33. The change in Carlyle’s opinion has been treated most fully by Professor Shine, whose conclusion that Carlyle’s early admiration for poetic fiction as “the purest truth” was wholly repudiated by March 1832 implies that Carlyle condemned all fiction and all works of fiction thereafter. See Shine, *Carlyle’s Fusion of Poetry, History, and Religion by 1834* (Chapel Hill, 1938), pp. 39–56.

<sup>2</sup> For early and late statements of this belief see Thomas Carlyle, *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*, Centenary Edition, 5 volumes (London, 1899), iii, 49; and Thomas Carlyle, *History of Frederick the Great*, Centenary Edition, 8 volumes (London, 1897), i, 18. For Carlyle’s Calvinism see Froude, *First Forty Years* and *Life in London, passim*; Ewald Flügel, *Thomas Carlyle’s religiöse und sittliche Entwicklung und Weltanschauung*

thought, though at first he had respected certain examples of the *Kunstroman*, he censured fiction on transcendentalist grounds.<sup>3</sup> As a social critic he regarded most poets, novelists, and dramatists as idle singers in a day sorely in need of direct instruction. Not even the immortal creators of fiction escaped reproof. The supernatural machinery of the *Iliad* could be excused only on the assumption that Homer believed it to be actually true.<sup>4</sup> Virgil's *Aeneid* seemed artificial and therefore false.<sup>5</sup> Shakespeare's tragedies and comedies, because they lacked factual truth, were inferior to his histories, rather than a dramatist Shakespeare should have been an historian.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, Carlyle seemed to have rejected all fiction, whether he applied the term in its narrow sense to the *genre* of the novel or in its earlier and broader sense to anything feigned or imagined. What the mythical Professor Gottfried Sauerteig said in "Biography" (January, 1832) has been taken as representative: "Fiction, while the feigner of it knows that he is feigning, partakes, more than we suspect, of the nature of *lying* . . . only in so far as Imagination, were it but momentarily, is *believed*, can there be any use or meaning in it, any enjoyment of it."<sup>7</sup>

It is not without significance, however, that Carlyle's mature dislike of fiction should have sprung from an early admiration of it, and that this admiration should have grown and flourished in spite of his strong Calvinist upbringing. James Carlyle was a stern man, "religious with the consent of his whole faculties,"<sup>8</sup> and he hated fiction as he hated falsehood. Margaret Carlyle, also deeply religious, shared her husband's views, and continually urged her son to read the Bible for guidance. The young Thomas, like the young Wotton Reinfred he was later to create, eagerly read whatever novels he could obtain from a circulating library, and "was aware of no contradiction" with his parents' theology.<sup>9</sup> Though he was serious, and at Edinburgh University read fewer works

(Leipzig, 1887), and C. F. Harrold, "The Nature of Carlyle's Calvinism," *Studies in Philology*, xxx (1936), 475-86.

<sup>3</sup> For the German cast of Carlyle's thought see C. F. Harrold, *Carlyle and German Thought 1819-1834* (New Haven, 1934), esp. Chapter VI "Carlyle and History," pp. 151-79; Margaret Storrs, *The Relation of Carlyle to Kant and Fichte* (Bryn Mawr, Pa.), 1929; René Wellek, *Carlyle and German Romanticism* (Prague, 1929).

<sup>4</sup> *Essays*, III, 49-50.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 51.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, V, 26.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 49-50.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas Carlyle, *Reminiscences*, ed. C. E. Norton, Everyman Edition (New York, 1932), p. 9.

<sup>9</sup> Wilson, I, 65-6.



Though somewhat guiltily, owing to his Calvinist background, he devoured fiction along with history and philosophy, and seems from the first to have read all the best novels and poems he could find. He read rapidly but not uncritically. Gibbon's style, with its "winged sarcasms" and the "Drury Lane character" of its descriptions, offended as often as it pleased him; Smollett's *History of England* was confused, and showed the haste and carelessness of its author; Hume's narrative was "clear and candid but cold-hearted." By 1818 he wondered "what benefit is derived from reading all this stuff," and concluded that the knowledge found in them was unprofitable, though amusing. Fiction suited his taste somewhat better.<sup>1</sup>

But his thoughts on fiction were as hazy and unsettled as his thoughts on history. To a mind independent enough to revolt against the anti-fictional teaching of his parents and athirst for knowledge through any channel, fiction provided positive instruction as well as amusement. Having read most of the great eighteenth-century novels, particularly those by Swift, Fielding, Smollett, and Sterne, he soon turned to more recent and popular fiction. To a friend he confessed ruefully that he had stayed up till four o'clock one night reading Lewis's *Monk*. Maria Edgeworth, Godwin, and the romances of Jane Porter left him cold, but he thought *Waverley* the best novel published in thirty years and read all of Scott's novels as they appeared. Several times he expressed admiration for Hazlitt's article in the *Edinburgh Review* on "Standard Novels."<sup>4</sup> He read poetry also (which for Calvinists was a kind of fiction). the poems of Crabbe, Cowper, Campbell; Moore's *Lalla Rookh*, Byron's *Childe Harold*—though with many misgivings. To exchange the "truths of philosophy for the airy nothings of these sweet singers" was foolish, he wrote, "but I could not help it."<sup>5</sup> Like the novels, they charmed him more than he liked to admit, and afforded relief from the doubts and uncertainties planted in his mind by Gibbon and Hume. Many a time during the next few years he must have "wasted the whole blessed evening in reading poetry and stuff" when he should have been

list of books read by Carlyle during the years 1809-11 in the files of the university library, but records for 1811-14 were lost or destroyed. See Masson, *op cit*, pp. 231-3.

<sup>3</sup> *Early Letters of Thomas Carlyle, 1814-1826*, ed C E Norton (London and New York, 1886), pp. 61, 69 and note, and 70. This early dislike of history is largely to be explained by the disillusioning effect Gibbon and the other "enlightened" historians, so "abundantly destitute of virtuous feeling," had upon his faith in Christianity. See Wilson,

1, 147.

<sup>4</sup> *Early Letters*, pp. 23, 70.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p. 73 (May 25, 1818).

reading more edifying works, or writing articles for the *Edinburgh Philosophical Journal* and David Brewster's *Edinburgh Encyclopedia*<sup>6</sup>

Not that the Calvinist in him was wholly dead "The most hardened novel reader," he wrote in 1821, "is now and then assailed by a chilling qualm, even at the very nodus of his story, on reflecting that all this mighty stir around him is but a fantasy' Not even the best fiction is invulnerable to such reflection, and the disadvantage must be accepted; for its opposite, the copy of reality, is more seriously restricted

The real occurrences of the world are too circumscribed and prosaic to give scope to our full energies, and it is a grand privilege possessed by us, that we can at will frame an ideal scene, where all shall be fair and free, where the passions and powers of our nature may be arranged, and set in opposition, and developed as we choose, while things without us offer no obstruction to our creative efforts "

At this time Carlyle's views on fiction are orthodox enough Only his occasional Calvinist qualms portend the change to come The crude materials of nature must be shaped and moulded by the mind of the artist; the real is the raw material of the ideal If the artist's subject is an historical figure he must not only select and order the events; he must alter them to suit his purposes<sup>7</sup> Historians, instead of following history slavishly, must impress upon it an artistic form, while writers of fiction, unhampered by reality, are at liberty to create their own materials for the representation of ideal truth

Although Carlyle was never to write successful short stories or novels, he was to have a try at both, and, moreover, fiction in a narrower sense was to play a singular role in his works An important phase of his courtship of Jane Welsh was the program of studies which, as master to pupil, he laid down for her in the letters As a means of strengthening the bond between them, but more for the sake of improving her mind, he suggested numerous subjects for original composition "There is nothing more injurious to the faculties than to keep poring over books continually without attempting to exhibit any of our own conceptions."<sup>8</sup> First he proposed a tragedy or a novel based on the story of Boadicea, which did not appeal to her at all; next, some poetic pieces on Napoleon,

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, p 157 (March 9, 1821)

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Carlyle, *Collectanea, 1821-1855*, ed S A Jones (Canton, Pa, 1903), p 25

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, p 34

<sup>9</sup> *The Love Letters of Thomas Carlyle and Jane Welsh*, ed Alexander Carlyle, 2 volumes (London and New York, 1909), 1, 37

which brought encouraging results; next, a scheme of submitting "short tales, sketches, miscellanies" to each other for criticism; and finally an epistolary novel to be written jointly, which Carlyle was the first to abandon. In the summer of 1822 he conceived a plan for writing a novel about a "noble mind struggling against an ignoble fate,"<sup>1</sup> but this too was abandoned because he felt himself incapable of depicting a true hero, and because "it were well that he died of love; and your novel-love is become a perfect drug"—showing his lack both of experience and of creative imagination.

It has been reported by one of Carlyle's intimate friends, but without further substantiation, that "the very first thing written by Carlyle for publication" was the true story "Cruthers and Jonson," the only one of the proposed scheme of tales and sketches that was ever completed. It is at least his first known attempt in the field of fiction, and his first experiment in narrative. Finished probably in the spring of 1822,<sup>2</sup> it reveals his ability as a story-teller and his conception of what fiction should be. Most scholars have ignored or dismissed it as "an unimportant sketch,"<sup>3</sup> and Carlyle himself dubbed it a "lumbering piebald composition—a *sooterkin*." Alongside his later works, "Cruthers and Jonson" does indeed shrink to insignificance, but the comparison is hardly just. The story has its high as well as its low points; it begins by soaring, and flutters feebly to a commonplace conclusion; it contains passages of lucid, effective narrative, and of the tritest moralizing; the style is now idiomatic and vivid, almost typical of his maturer style, now halting and pedestrian. Though "Cruthers and Jonson" is an un-

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 1, 93.

<sup>2</sup> Carlyle was an old man when he told Allingham this (See William Allingham, "Some Fifty Years Ago," *Fraser's Magazine*, 10 (n.s. xix, 1879), 798-9.) If it is correct "Cruthers and Jonson" antedates March, 1821, when his first real article, a review of Joanna Baillie's "Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters," was begun. That Carlyle's memory of his early writings was not always accurate is shown by his notion that the ms. of *Wotton Reinfred* had been committed to the flames. The early dating of the short story is generally doubted, but it is possible that, having begun it in the spring of 1821, he laid it aside until in the autumn of 1822 he considered joint authorship with Jane Welsh, and finished it and sent it to her in December. This would explain the sudden change of attitude and method which is noticeable in the middle of the story. The last third of it must have been written as late as the spring of 1822, after he had become well enough acquainted with Jane Welsh to write as he does about Margaret Herberts. The first third, however, appears to have been composed earlier.

<sup>3</sup> W. S. Johnson, *Thomas Carlyle, a Study of His Literary Apprenticeship, 1814-1831* (New Haven, 1911), p. 72. Froude does not mention it, Wilson only in passing. But Shepherd and Allingham have both given it critical praise. See R. H. Shepherd, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Thomas Carlyle*, 2 volumes (London, 1881), i, 77-8; and William Allingham, *op. cit.*, pp. 790-800.

important sketch with respect to ideas, one may detect in its virtues the direction of Carlyle's genius, and in its weaknesses the narrative and stylistic problems which he was to face when he attempted more ambitious works.<sup>4</sup>

"Cruthers and Jonson" is an eighteenth-century tale of friendship. Two boys who, as bitter rivals, fight for leadership at the parish school of Hoddam are suddenly reconciled and become inseparable companions. The next ten years bring Jonson little success or happiness, and he recklessly joins the rebellion of 1745, during which, after the Battle of Prestonpans, he is taken prisoner at Carlisle and sentenced to death. Cruthers, for whom matters have fared better, hastens to him in accordance with the oath of friendship they had sworn together as boys and tries vainly to help him escape. At the last moment Jonson is freed from the death sentence, but is exiled from the kingdom and sails for Jamaica. At Kingston he luckily befriends a wealthy merchant named Councillor Herberts, who seems delighted to make Jonson first his clerk, then his partner in business, and finally his son-in-law. When he dies, Jonson takes the first opportunity to return with his wife to his old home, Knockhill, and the two friends are re-united for the rest of their lives.

Carlyle makes much of this simple and naive tale. Its inherent faults—lack of unity in time and place—he did not know enough about fiction to correct by plunging *in medias res*. After two introductory paragraphs on the value of friendship, "I proceed with my narrative," beginning at the beginning, with a brief account of the two boys at school. The story falls into three sections: the first describing Jonson's last fight with Cruthers and the reconciliation leading to their pledge of friendship, and second, Jonson's adventures ten years later in Prince Charles's army and in the prison at Carlisle, and the third, his rising fortunes in Jamaica, his marriage to Margaret Herberts, and his return with her to Scotland. In both method and mood the narrative is that of eighteenth-century fiction. Starting quickly, it proceeds quickly also, employing general rather than minute detail, and in Carlyle's effort to concentrate on essentials leaving much untold. Its pace is steady except where particularly vivid or significant incident calls for closer examination. The narrative thus advances principally by means of episodes, which though not well knit into the whole, are in themselves narrated vividly and skilfully.

<sup>4</sup> In spite of his scorn, Carlyle was not wholly ashamed of it, for he allowed it to be published in *Fraser's Magazine* in January, 1831.



In these episodes Carlyle's intention has been to narrate as succinctly as possible, relying on significant rather than on picturesque details and emphasizing the succession of events rather than the scene. His style, as we have hinted, only suggests the graphic quality which he is later to develop. The episodes, nevertheless, already show a tendency to become anecdotal, to become units complete in themselves, capable of standing alone. Although anecdote can be made to point a moral or philosophic truth, it is here no more than a neatly turned episode, often humorous in character.<sup>5</sup> The battle of Prestonpans is introduced through two such anecdotes, one concerning the Ecclefechan barber, who except for his leanness somewhat resembles Falstaff, the other concerning Jonson. Both are brilliantly told in the detailed style. Here is the latter:

The Prince's or Pretender's cavalry being in the very hottest of the *mêlée*, came upon the volunteer troop of Glasgow fusiliers, which still maintained their ground, partly because they were too heavy for running well. The colonel of this gallant corps, mounted on a huge stalking Sleswick horse, and wrapt up in the folds of a large felt great-coat, rode out and struck about him furiously, not in the *etoccado* and *passado* way, but in circles and curves, to the right and to the left, above him and below, so that his iron seemed every where and no where; and had his strength continued, he might have beggared all attack, and formed a kind of living *cheval-de-frise*. His weapon struck Jonson on the head, with a force which assured the latter that his skull was fractured; whereupon aiming a dreadful blow at the manufacturer, he hewed off as it seemed a whole flank from him, and sent his horse, on which he still stuck as if by miracle for a few seconds, to the remotest corner of the field. The Glasgow fusiliers set up a doleful cry, and then laid down their arms. Jonson did not fall, but found his hat had lost half the crown, and the whole right side of the brim; and the Glasgow colonel's left quarter proved to be in truth the left pocket and skirt of his felt great-coat, smitten off at the expense of his horse's ribs and of Jonson's blade, and found to enwrap in it three sandwiches, some five or six black puddings, one tobacco box, and a very superior flask of Antigua rum. The colonel lived long after, making muslin and drinking cold punch; but his surtout was rendered altogether useless, and his steed halted to its dying day.<sup>6</sup>

If this is overdone, it shows clearly enough one of Carlyle's talents. He is to be a master of short, pungent narrative.

<sup>5</sup> A good example of Carlyle's early humor is to be found in his account of Cruthers and Jonson pledging their lifelong friendship after the reconciliation. *Essays*, v, 175.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, v, 181-2.

Carlyle cannot, however, tell the whole of his story in episodes. Not only would such a detailed method take too long but it would dissipate the emphasis of more important incidents, only a few of which deserve such minute treatment. The rest of the plot must be carried by a faster-moving style. Accordingly, after the statement that Cruthers and Jonson "never quarrelled more" he apologizes for having taken so much of the reader's time, owing to "my ambition of minuteness and fidelity" and submits to the exigencies of space and to his own lack of confidence as a narrator. In order to spare the reader excess detail he resorts to a summary style, what might be called "running narrative." Broad event leads to broad event, episodes are summarized, and generalizations succeed one another in graceful fashion. There is no "living present" for the reader to proceed in, only a rapid account of typical or random movements. The important mark of distinction between the two styles is the time element. 'Detailed narrative' tends to produce in the reader the illusion that he is living with the characters from moment to moment. "Running narrative" lacks this power, it outlines, summarizes, interprets. It has the virtue of enabling the author to cover long time intervals quickly. But, though adequate, and even excellent in clarity and pace, it cannot attain the quality of swift moving, vivid reality found in the other.

The principal characters of the story are well drawn. One of the best portraits is that of Mr. Scroggs, the "gaunt and sallow visaged Dominic in whose presence all jarring passions died into a calm," who becomes clear to us as many of the minor figures in *The French Revolution* become clear through Carlyle's vivid account of their behavior.<sup>7</sup> Margaret is not so much characterized as described, and the description which Carlyle devotes to her is rather a paean than a portrait—at once eloquent, impassioned, and humorous—because, of course, he is describing Jane in his own right and with the knowledge that she will recognize herself in the picture. Hence his defensive, humorous, and paternal attitude toward Jonson, who is an idealization of the youthful Carlyle. Sentences like these—"In this new capacity I rejoice to say Jonson acquitted himself manfully" and "My admiration is, how in the name of wonder Jonson ever got her wooed"—show how often Carlyle identified himself with his hero and how he had therefore to assume a tone of self-effacing modesty when speaking of Jonson's virtues and deeds. Cruthers has little importance; it is Jonson who thinks and

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, v, 171-2. See especially the passage beginning "The Dominic's jaw sank a considerable fraction of an ell."

lives and suffers as Carlyle had done. Although never in prison himself, Carlyle knew the misery and despair that are universally the result of spiritual struggles, and so could appropriately fit out Jonson with his own emotions.

By times he would stamp quickly and sternly across the damp pavement of his dungeon—by times he would pause, and, grasping his iron gyves, his countenance would darken with a scowl which spoke unutterable things. Of immeasurable agony it spoke. But of craven yielding to it, or of weak despair? No! he never yielded to it—never dreamt of yielding. What good was it to yield? To be self-despised—to be triumphed over—to be *pitted* of the scurvy rabble that watched him! This would have stung him worse than all.<sup>8</sup>

It is where the story leaves the realm of Carlyle's own experiences and enters the less veritable realm of his hoped-for future that the narrative breaks down. In the third section of the tale the character of Jonson ceases to be real. No longer does Carlyle regard it with that half-comic, half-rueful humor which at first made it so engaging. He piles laudatory adjectives upon his hero until Jonson becomes too perfect for belief. His actions are exemplary, his personality colorless.<sup>9</sup> Carlyle, so serious about his own future which Jonson represents, loses his sense of humor and becomes moral. Jonson's rise to prosperity in Kingston reads like the condensed version of a Horatio Alger novel in which the poor boy makes good and marries the employer's daughter. No event is clearly described, and event follows event without causal relationship. On Jonson's arrival in Kingston he meets—immediately and without any delay or difficulty—Councillor Herberts, and is taken into his home and business. If it was not so easy to credit the stroke of fortune which saved him from being beheaded, it is still harder to accept the remarkable sequence of circumstances by which he finds his way back to Knockhill: his rapid rise in a business he knows nothing about, the incredible speed with which he woos and wins Margaret, who though superbly beautiful is apparently without another suitor on the island, and, finally, the almost simultaneous occurrence of three events—the death of George II, the death of Councillor Herberts, and the offering for sale of Jonson's old property—which facilitate his return to Scotland with his wife and his reunion with Cruthers. In this section moralizing saturates the narrative and shows Carlyle more in-

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, v, 185.

<sup>9</sup> See especially the passage beginning: "I have already called him good-natured and courteous, as well as firm and fearless. We have seen that . . ." (*ibid.*, v, 195).

terested in teaching than in telling a story. His attitude becomes that of a preacher; detailed narrative ceases, and all causation and motivation yield to the kindly dictates of Providence. By the time Jonson reaches Jamaica, Carlyle has lost an attitude which is indispensable to the writer of fiction: what he himself calls the "ambition of minuteness and fidelity."

It might seem now that Carlyle had finished with fiction. To him "Cruthers and Jonson" was a "stupid farrago." To us it registers his failure to portray reality objectively. To Jane it was excellent, but her praise carried the bias of her admiration for the author. The projected series of short tales came to nothing. In her next letter she confessed and amusingly illustrated her inability to write anything equal to "Cruthers and Jonson," and gave up the attempt. Even the bits of poetry which she had written in response to Carlyle's teaching and inspiration ceased after 1822; and, although she continued eagerly with the course of reading he gave her, the plans for their joint authorship were abandoned.<sup>1</sup> In November, 1825, with his mind full of Goethe, Musaeus, Tieck, Richter, and others whose works he had been translating for *German Romance*, he wrote Jane that he had begun again to undertake "some scheme of a *Kunstwerk* of my own! There are pictures and thoughts and feelings in me, which *shall* come out, tho' the Devil himself withstood it!" This is followed by an amusing account of Larry the horse, who prevented him from writing his *Kunstwerk*. "What a termination for my *novel*! But the time will come, must come!"<sup>2</sup>

Shortly after his marriage in October, 1826, the time did come: he started his novel *Wotton Reinfred*. For the epistolary novel which, four years earlier, he had urged Jane to write with him, he had outlined a tragic and bombastic plot about a world-weary, life-sick youth and a lovely heroine who after many adventures are separated by fate and die broken-hearted. The plot of *Wotton Reinfred*, though similar to this, benefits by Carlyle's greater maturity and a close resemblance to *Wilhelm Meister*. It is, in fact, a Carlylean version of the German *Bildungsroman*, showing all the influences which affected the *genre*: that of the "confession" literature which followed in the wake of Rousseau;

<sup>1</sup> In July of the next year (1823) Carlyle, on one more attempt to find something they could write together, suggested that they imitate or translate some of the tales by Musaeus and together publish the best of these in a volume. Nothing came of this either. *Love Letters*, i, 231-3.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, ii, 189.

that of *Werther* in the cloying mood of world-weariness and supersensitiveness which characterizes the social-misfit hero; that of Byron in his introspection and neuroticism; and, finally, that of *Wilhelm Meister* in its solution of the hero's problems by the gospel of work. The apprenticeship theme, although given prominence, is not in Carlyle's hands what it was in Goethe's. With the broad cultural self-development by which the German hero passed through his black period of emotional and philosophic despair, Carlyle had only a limited sympathy. Although he himself had undergone such a cultural development, he placed nearly all the emphasis on the necessity of the hero's finding something to do—whatever might be found—and doing that "with all thy might."<sup>3</sup> Wotton, only seven chapters old when Carlyle abandoned him, had not yet found his way out of despair—had found no work—though the indications are that later he would have done so. But no Goethean harmonious self-development or *Bildung* seems probable. More like Werther than Wilhelm Meister, Wotton gives promise either of dying of love (according to the original plan) or of fighting doggedly through despair to spiritual faith as Carlyle himself did.<sup>4</sup>

In spite of its similarity to the *Bildungsroman*, however, *Wotton Reinfred* is largely an autobiographical novel. Since Carlyle's own life clearly illustrated the apprenticeship theme, many of the resemblances to *Werther* and *Wilhelm Meister* may have been fortuitous. If he borrowed consciously from these works he borrowed only such elements as could be related to his own experience. Self-confession was natural to him, as may be seen in his letters, and the confessions of Wotton and Jane may owe little more than precedential support to those of Rousseau and Goethe. Wotton, though a literary type, owes his temperament as well as many of his adventures to Carlyle himself. Bernard Swane, corresponding to Werner as the hero's companion, has a closer original in Edward Irving. Jane Montagu is in many ways a typical romance heroine, of mysterious birth, great beauty, and a deep and faithful love for the hero which he does not realize until the end; but there is more than a little of Margaret Gordon in her, and much of Jane

<sup>3</sup> Susanne Howe, *Wilhelm Meister and His English Kinsmen* (New York, 1930), pp 10-11.

<sup>4</sup> For a discussion of the German influence on *Wotton Reinfred* with respect to both form and thought, see H. Kraeger, "Carlyles Deutsche Studien und der 'Wotton Reinfred,'" *Anglia*, Beiblatt ix (1898), 193-219. For its relation more specifically to *Wilhelm Meister* and the *Bildungsroman*, see Susanne Howe, *op cit*, pp 106-13, 117-18, and *passim*.

Welsh. In the same degree, the other characters may be traced both to Carlyle's own experience and to his reading.<sup>5</sup>

This is best seen in the story itself, which may be outlined briefly. The novel opens with a discussion of happiness between Wotton and an older cousin of his, a Doctor. Wotton, at the age of twenty-two-and-a-half, has loved and lost; and now, with the eloquence of despair which enjoys itself, like that of Romeo in love with Rosaline, is rejecting the consolations of the Doctor, who advises him to travel. Mention of Edmund Walter, obviously the villain responsible for the hero's plight, leads to mention of the heroine, Jane Montagu, who, it appears, has been faithless. In the second chapter Carlyle turns back to Wotton's youth, and writes autobiography. Wotton's simple and religious parents, his boyish unhappiness at school and growing discontent at the university (undistinguishable from Edinburgh), his aloofness and morbid sensitiveness, the loss of his faith through reading, and the unavailing sympathy of his friend Bernard Swane (Edward Irving), through whom he meets the girl (Jane Welsh) whose beauty and charm restore him to happiness—these only idealize the truth. Complications soon appear, and the lovers are parted. Wotton contracts an even severer case of romantic agony, and though a report that Jane has married Edmund Walter is proven false he becomes so distracted that Bernard Swane takes him south on a walking tour through the Lake Country. While they are ferrying across Solway Firth the helmsman shows them a small gold locket which has been found in the mountains, containing a picture of Wotton—lost apparently by Jane, who may therefore love him still. Riding through the Cumberland mountains they encounter a stranger named Maurice Herbert who invites them to his "House of the Wold," where high intellectual discussions among the guests present Wotton with some of the transcendental philosophy that is to cure him. There are Dalbrook, a Kantian and Carlylean conception of Coleridge; Henry Williams, probably modeled after Hazlitt; a young Oxonian steeped in the associational psychology of David Hartley; and Burridge, an "atrabiliar gentleman" whose cynical arguments Wotton skilfully annihilates with a sharp Socratic question. At the dramatic appearance of Edmund Walter next morning, Wotton is overcome

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Carlyle, *Last Words of Thomas Carlyle* (New York, 1892), Introd., p. v; Froude said that he knew the originals of the men and women in *Wotton*, and could "if necessary" identify them. See also W. S. Johnson, *op. cit.*, pp. 73-7; and Susanne Howe, *op. cit.*, pp. 106-13, 117-18.

with emotion; his eyes dilate; his cheeks become alternately flushed and pale, he trembles, yet manages (we are told) to meet his enemy with an outward appearance of calm. But he excuses himself, and rides off toward the village where he knows Bernard has gone with Maurice Herbert. On the way he encounters a party of three—two strange gentlemen and a lady who proves to be Jane Montagu. They proceed toward town and lodge at an inn for the night. Next morning Jane sends for Wotton and reveals her love; but complications are thicker than ever, and mysteriously she repulses him and begins the narrative of her life, starting from childhood. Before the point is reached at which she had met Wotton and fallen in love with him, the novel breaks off suddenly.<sup>6</sup>

*Wotton Reinfred* furnishes proof, as "Cruthers and Jonson" had implied, that Carlyle could never become a successful novelist unless he made a complete change in his treatment of the action and the characters. Wotton's world with its Doctor, its Bernard, its Edmund Walter, its Jane Montagu, and its philosophers, was an unreal world—visible to the reader only through a haze of philosophic speeches and conversations which fail to create the illusion of reality. When Jane and Wotton meet alone at the inn and fall impulsively into each other's arms, Jane sharply, even angrily, withdraws herself and cries, hiding her face:

"Forbear, Sir! If you hope to see me another minute, no more of this!" [And after Wotton's attempted apologies] "Beware, sir!" said she, "It was not to hear love declarations, which I must not listen to, that I sent for you hither. My life is made of sterner stuff; they are far other tasks that await me Alas!" continued she, "I have no friend in the world, if you be my lover. I am an unhappy girl, an orphan wanderer!" She burst into weeping.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> D. A. Wilson (II, 24) asserts that *Wotton* "was laid aside for ever about the end of May [1827]." In view of Carlyle's later references to it, *Letters of Thomas Carlyle, 1826-1836*, ed. C. E. Norton (London and New York, 1889), p. 45, June 4, 1827, and p. 89, February 1, 1828, it seems likely that while an increasing number of articles for the *Edinburgh* and *Foreign Review* took most of his time he continued to work fitfully at it until the next year, when other and better ideas began to supplant it. The reasons for *Wotton's* death are thus: (1) Carlyle's need for money while living at Edinburgh, which drove him to articles; (2) possibly, his realization that if it were finished *Wotton* could not hope to succeed in the face of the prevalent rage for fashionable novels; (3) the growth of the Clothes Philosophy, which required a different form from that of the novel; (4) Carlyle's realization that he was not a novelist, could not give the form originality and freshness, and could not turn it to his purposes.

<sup>7</sup> *Last Words*, p. 182.

This kind of speech, unreal psychologically and in expression, abounds. The same stilted diction may be found also in Wotton's outpourings of misery, and in the description of his meeting with Edmund Walter.

In view of Carlyle's love for reality and his hatred of stereotyped sentiment, such romantic falsification is strange indeed unless we conclude that he did not know life well enough to set it down faithfully on paper or to recreate it accurately in his imagination. His mind turned not to life as it was lived by men but to life as described in the books he had read. This is not to say that there are no authentic scenes in *Wotton*. The account of Wotton's and Bernard's meeting with Maurice Herbert is well handled, though not so well as some scenes in "Cruthers and Jonson." Indeed, Carlyle continues the departure from verisimilitude which began to show itself in the shorter work. The falsification goes beyond romanticism, beyond idealized reality—to melodrama. Violent emotions, conventional reactions, trite expressions, many blushes, many tears and sighs, much heart-rending after the manner of Werther—these combine to make *Wotton* a novel of little promise for its author. His tendency to extravagant phrasing, which was later refined to an eccentricity in *Sartor* and the historical essays, appears here at its worst. Wotton is speaking to the Doctor

"Would she were gone from my thoughts, gone as if she had not been; for here the remembrance of her is but a curse. Was it not hard? One only hope, and that to mock me with the Fiend's arch scoff! The world was dead around me, the last heart that loved me in the cold grave, all efforts baffled, one by one the green places of my universe scathed and blackened into ashes, my whole life one error, a seeking of light and goodness and a finding of darkness and despair. I was to myself as a frightful mistake, a spectre in the middle of breathing men, an unearthly presence, that ought not to be there. And she—O fair and golden as the dawn she rose upon my soul. Night with its ghastly fantasm's fled away, and beautiful and solemn in earnest shade and gay sunshine lay our life before me. And then, and then! O God, a gleam of hell passed over the face of my angel, and the pageant was rolled together like a scroll, and thickest darkness fell over me, and I heard the laughter of a demon!"<sup>8</sup>

He writes closer to his talents when he speaks as author. After a vivid description of the scenery and its effect upon Wotton as he rode toward the village before meeting Jane and her escorts, Carlyle strikes a theme to which he will return many times later, and with increasing eloquence—the theme of death.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9



But what words can express our feeling in such hours? It is as if the spirit for a moment were delivered from the clay, as if in Pisgah vision it descried the gates of its celestial home, and tones of a diviner melody wafted from beyond this world, led captive our purified sense. And the thought of death, as in all scenes of grandeur, steals over us, and of our lost ones that are already hid in the narrow house, and of all the innumerable nations of the dead that are there before them, the great and famous that have gone thither since the beginning of time. Their multitude affrights us, the living are but a handful, one wave in the boundless tide of ages. Who would grieve for his own light afflictions in this universal doom? Who could envy, who could hate or injure any fellow man? Frail transitory man! we weep over him in fondest pity, for the shadows of Death bound in our brightest visions, and mingling in the jubilee of Nature is heard a voice of lamentation!<sup>9</sup>

This is Carlyle's interrogatory and exclamatory style at its young best. Goethe did not 'musically teach' him here, nor did any other writer of books, but rather the Calvinism which still clung to him. The tone of such a passage comes in striking contrast to the artificiality characterizing most of *Wotton*. Yet both styles told against him as a novelist and pointed the way toward another form of literary composition. Being on the one hand too melodramatic, and on the other too eloquently speculative, Carlyle crippled a story that had possibilities. Although he showed talent in narrative, description, and characterization, he was never to become a novelist because he was too much interested in ideas. A comparison of Wilhelm's reaction to the loss of Mariana with Wotton's to the loss of Jane reveals clearly enough where Carlyle erred. The long complaints and moanings of the heart broken hero—the feature that is most detrimental to *Wotton Reinfred*—Goethe suppresses and, resuming the narrative with a lucid and sympathetic account of Wilhelm's sorrows, allows him only one outcry, which, because the joys of his love for Mariana have been fully described, is artistically justified and emotionally effective.<sup>1</sup> Carlyle could not hold the note of reality that he found in the novels of Goethe because he did not begin with reality; he began with an idea and, in his effort to represent the idea, neglected the reality.<sup>2</sup>

In the matter of narrative style, *Wotton Reinfred* lies in the direct

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 169–70.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the first two chapters of *Wilhelm Meister*, Book II, and the first chapter of *Wotton Reinfred*.

<sup>2</sup> "He [Carlyle] writes his story to illustrate a preconceived idea of general application" W. S. Johnson, *op cit.*, pp. 80–1.

course of Carlyle's development as a writer, and shows him stepping farther away from the attitude of the novelist which he had struck successfully in parts of "Cruthers and Jonson," toward that of the historian. Most of *Wotton Reinfred* is told in the generalized style. Conversations are no longer summarized, but Carlyle is no master of dialogue and betrays his uneasiness when the story gets into the mouths of his characters. Only a few times in the seven chapters is the conversation natural enough to permit the reader to forget that he is reading speeches. "Of what is wrong we are always conscious," say Dalbrook, quoting Goethe; "of what is right, never."<sup>3</sup> When Wotton and Jane are speaking together at the inn, we are "conscious" of the falsification of emotion and expression. In the long argumentative speeches of Williams, Dalbrook, Burrige, etc., the long explanatory descriptions by Williams to Wotton, and Jane's narrative, we come to the domain of literary convention, where the reader's demand for reality is willingly waived for the time being and the judgment desires only that they serve an efficient purpose. But even here Carlyle's use of literary convention is *gauche* and self-conscious. The fictional machinery is not under easy control, and we become "conscious" again. Neither Jane's narrative nor that in Chapter II, although correctly modeled after similar narratives in *Wilhelm Meister*, is completely successful. Wotton's boyhood was largely autobiographical, but the second chapter is too summary in method and lacks the inherent interest that Goethe would have given it.

As in "Cruthers and Jonson," Carlyle writes best within the scene—in episodes. Because we have only the beginning of what would have been a long travel-novel, the episodes are few. Two chapters consist mostly of monologue (II and VII), and two mostly of philosophical discussion. What episodes there are, however—that of the lost locket, the meeting with Maurice Herbert, the startling appearance of Edmund Walter at the "House of the Wold," and the meeting of Jane and Wotton on the road—stand out as vivid pieces of detailed narrative. The summary method ceases, and the account proceeds from moment to moment at a vigorous pace. Conversation is employed sparingly and rather effectively. Within each episode the narrative is objective; Carlyle tries not to intrude himself as author. Often he writes from the point of view of Wotton,<sup>4</sup> but not skilfully. Although each episode contains an element of suspense, there is no progression toward a point of highest interest. Nor is there any climactic development from episode

<sup>3</sup> *Last Words*, p. 101.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 176 ff.

to episode. It might be argued that within so short a fragment such development cannot be expected to appear, but confusion is already evident. After throwing out such lines of interest as those of the locket and of the relationship between Jane and Edmund Walter, Carlyle patently does not know how to integrate them. By the time he has brought Jane and her aunt back to Scotland he seems to have lost control of his story. For if Jane is not interrupted suddenly in her narration, she will have to tell Wotton the whole mystery and so break the suspense; or, if she is interrupted, then the story will be made even more artificial.

The failure of *Wotton* thus resulted from Carlyle's special inaptitude for fiction. Ambitious for literary fame, he was by temperament as well as by talent ill-equipped to write a *Kunstroman*. He neither could nor would describe invented scenes with his old "minuteness and fidelity." It is not that Carlyle lacked the power of invention; he had it in abundance. There needed only the right aim to call it forth, and that aim had not yet occurred to him. Though he tried, he did poorly. Something of his future dislike of fiction can be seen in his unwillingness to invent the multitude of details, the seemingly insignificant episodes, that put the stamp of reality on *Wilhelm Meister*. Hence the spareness and artificiality of the plot, the thinness of characterization, the transparent machinery created by his ambition to emulate Goethe. Determined to write a book of fiction, he soon found that, by virtue of this attitude, he was conditioned against writing it well. Although he loved reality, and was to spend much of his life enforcing its beauty and importance upon the English reading public, it was not in fiction that he himself was to reproduce that reality. Finally, although he was now finished with fiction as a literary *genre*, he was not finished with many of its devices, which he was to employ in other media.

### III

THE first fruit of Carlyle's ambition to write "a Book" was *Sartor Resartus*. In a more important sense, it was the fruit of his maturing ideas. Begun in September, 1830, as an article entitled "Thoughts on Clothes" and sent to Fraser, it was suddenly recalled in January, 1831.<sup>5</sup> Carlyle was not satisfied with it, and now took the opportunity to devise a more suitable form for the Clothes Philosophy, whose far-reaching

<sup>5</sup> A brief but adequate account of the genesis of *Sartor Resartus* may be found in C. F. Harrold's edition of the work *Sartor Resartus* (New York, 1937), pp. xxiv-xxvii. See also Archibald MacMechan's edition, Wilson, II, *Carlyle to "The French Revolution,"* 177 ff., Froude, *First Forty Years*, II, 129 ff.

significance and multifarious applications to contemporary life he saw more clearly every day. "I can devise some more biography for *Teufelsdröckh*; give a second deeper part, in the same vein, leading through Religion and the nature of Society, and Lord knows what."<sup>6</sup> Thus the first and third divisions of the work were to be expository of the Clothes Philosophy, while the middle division elucidated the life and character of its originator. The whole was to be "put together in the fashion of a kind of Didactic Novel; but indeed properly like nothing yet extant."<sup>7</sup> It was to be a hoax, Carlyle hoped, of a kind beloved by all great satirists, which influenced its readers for their betterment whether they were deceived or not. Its literary form, though not like that of any novel, was indeed different from all other works before it. Carlyle did not, as in *Wotton Reinfred*, think first of the form, and then attempt to express certain ideas through it; he thought first of the ideas and let them take their own form. In both works he began with the idea; but while in the first he tried to impress a conventional form upon that idea, in the second he left the idea free to create its own form.

A love of hoaxing is among the few of Carlyle's traits which he did not recognize in himself and discuss in his letters and notebooks. It was, of course, common for writers of his day to publish their works anonymously. Periodicals required anonymity in articles of a controversial nature, as a weapon both of defense and of offense, and books of fiction were similarly armored.<sup>8</sup> Deception flourished on the printed page, though most of it was transparent enough and fooled few intelligent readers. Hoping to preserve his anonymity, Carlyle planned in *Sartor Resartus* to outdo the deceivers and foist not only a person but a whole philosophy upon the English public. This was the best way, he thought, to get his ideas read and understood. The element of deceit was only ancillary; no one today can fail to perceive the motive behind what seems, like fiction proper, to partake "of the nature of *lying*." The hypothetical existence and fabricated character of *Teufelsdröckh*, the history of his life, the exalted description of the scenes familiar to him, the elaborate critical discussions of the English Editor concerning the

<sup>6</sup> *Letters*, p. 183 (January 21, 1831)

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 365 (May 27, 1833).

<sup>8</sup> In protest against "the critical cowardice of anonymity," Richard Cumberland started his short-lived *London Review*, which expired after four quarterly numbers had appeared in 1809. Apparently neither publisher nor public yet wished the veil of mystery and authority to be drawn from before the critic. In the older English Reviews, it was not until 1912, when William Cox became editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, that names of magazine writers were employed with impunity to entice readers. See Walter Graham, *English Literary Periodicals* (New York, 1930), pp. 237-40.

value of the philosopher's strange notions, and the chaotic contents of the "six paper bags"—these were not the valuable portions of the work. They merely added artistic verisimilitude to an otherwise incredible fabrication.

On the other hand, no one today can fail to perceive Carlyle's pleasure in concocting this deceit. Although a little over-elaborate, the first two chapters of the work proceed somewhat in the manner of the book-review essay which had been developed chiefly in the *Edinburgh Review* by Jeffrey and Macaulay and imitated in the other literary periodicals of the day, including *Fraser's Magazine*, where *Sartor Resartus* first appeared. After a spirited discussion of the inadequacy of British philosophy in explaining the spiritual world, *Die Kleider, ihr Werden und Werken* and its obscure author are introduced; the circumstances of its translation and special presentation to the British people by the unknown English Editor are elucidated. The Editor, however, conceals his identity; and a sly footnote states that not even the publisher of the work knows it.<sup>9</sup> Such devices are followed in the subsequent chapters by others of a more elaborate nature.

Carlyle soon makes it plain that *Sartor Resartus* is to be more than a literary review. The reader is shown the German work and its author from all sides. But the work is presented piecemeal. First from one section and then from another, meaning is dug out, explained, and evaluated, with no regard to the original order. Discussion of its content is mingled with judgment upon its value. One of Carlyle's most skilful devices for establishing the hoax and gulling the reader lies in the qualified approval which the Editor evinces in his judgments. "It were a piece of vain flattery to pretend that this Work on Clothes entirely contents us," he writes,<sup>1</sup> and professes surprise, consternation, even contempt for some of the philosopher's ideas. By the pretense of disbelief he predisposes the reader to belief, wins his confidence, and forestalls criticism.

This device may be seen clearly in the chapter on Aprons. "What, for example, are we to make of such sentences as the following?" and he quotes from what he calls "one of the most unsatisfactory Sections of the whole Volume."<sup>2</sup> Aprons, says Teufelsdröckh, are defenses. The military and police forces are only "a huge scarlet-coloured iron-fastened

<sup>9</sup> To sign this footnote Carlyle borrowed the initials O. Y., which to most readers meant "Oliver Yorke"—the *nom de plume* of Dr. William Maginn, co-editor of *Fraser's Magazine*, which itself was often called "Oliver Yorke."

<sup>1</sup> *Sartor Resartus* (ed. C. F. Harrold), p. 28.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

Apron." But he confesses that he does not understand the purpose or use of the Episcopal, or Cassock, apron. Since the notion that the forces of ecclesiastical authority had lost their usefulness was heresy to most English readers, Carlyle felt that it could not be expressed directly. It was therefore put into Teufelsdröckh's mouth and firmly denounced by the Editor, though with such obvious irony as to make the reader sure of Carlyle's own opinion. A variant of the device appears at the end of the chapter. Teufelsdröckh is quoted as asserting that "The Journalists are now the true Kings and Clergy"<sup>3</sup> and that henceforth historians must concern themselves not with royal dynasties and wars but with the affairs of newspapers and their editors. He knows of only one such history—which he has not seen—a history of the British Newspaper Press, written in English and entitled *Satan's Invisible World Displayed*. To English readers this title would suggest several books on witchcraft. The Editor concludes.

Thus does the good Homer not only nod, but snore. Thus does Teufelsdröckh, wandering in regions where he had little business, confound the old authentic Presbyterian Witchfinder with a new, spurious, imaginary Historian of the *Britische Journalistik*, and so stumble on perhaps the most egregious blunder in Modern Literature<sup>4</sup>

Carlyle delivers this thrust at the British Press with canny skill. Whereas in the first instance his own opinion came clear through the Editor's ironic disapproval of an idea of Teufelsdröckh's which Carlyle really believed to be true, it now comes clear through the Editor's horrified notice of Teufelsdröckh's blunder in confusing a history of witchcraft with a history of the English Press. A third device is that in which the Editor, instead of condemning an idea which is true, praises one that is untrue.<sup>5</sup> Through these and other devices, which hoodwink the foolish and teach the wise, Carlyle perfects his hoax.<sup>6</sup> Many of them are

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 45

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 45-6

<sup>5</sup> In the chapter entitled Miscellaneous Historical (Book II, Chapter VII), Teufelsdröckh ignores the admirable gallantry of Sir Walter Raleigh in throwing down his cloak in the mud for Queen Elizabeth, and inquires whether the Queen used cosmetics. To this the Editor replies that "Sir Walter knew well what he was doing, and had the Maiden Queen been stuffed parchment dyed in verdigris would have done the same—praising a gallantry for which Carlyle certainly had no use

<sup>6</sup> Other devices were (1) the parenthetical insertion of the original German to clarify obscure phrases, (2) the extended quotations, with page references (*Sartor*, p. 47), (3) the Germanic style, (4) the ingenuous attempts of the Editor to read the character of Teufelsdröckh through his ideas, (5) the Editor's repeated concern about the difficulty of his task, because of the confusion in *Die Kleider*, and (6) his confession that he himself

supererogatory: by their abundance and variety Carlyle overstates his case, purposely gives himself away in order to instruct more clearly, but at the same time adds to the reader's confusion by entangling the thought. When one considers that Carlyle might have instructed still more clearly by adopting a simpler method of presenting his ideas, one realizes how much he loved the devices which made *Sartor Resartus* so unintelligible to his contemporaries.

Two kinds of fiction can be distinguished in *Sartor Resartus*. One—described above—lies in the machinery of the work the creation of the German philosopher, his Philosophy of Clothes, his remarkable Treatise, the English Editor, and the extended use of irony. Carlyle's powers of invention are now shown at their best, for here invention does not, as in the novel, involve the creation of incidents in imitation of human life and character; it draws not from his experience in the world of men and women, but from the world of books. Its purpose is to instruct by deceiving unsuccessfully. It proceeds by presenting an idea in two ways, one of them showing it to be true or false, as the case may be.

The other kind of fiction in *Sartor* belongs to the didactic novel, and appears chiefly in Book II, where, on the assumption that an understanding of the man is requisite to an understanding of his philosophy,<sup>7</sup> Carlyle relates the story of Teufelsdröckh's childhood and early manhood. Here the purpose is to instruct indirectly, not by partial deceit but by representing an idea or theory in terms of human character. Its method is not expository but narrative; its material is imaginatively conceived fact and incident. In Book II this kind of fiction lies within the deceptive machinery of the hoax. For the history of Teufelsdröckh, although it is fiction imaginatively conceived by Carlyle, is palmed off as biography based upon the contents of the "Six considerable PAPER BAGS" containing autobiographical fragments by the Professor himself. The account of his life will be fact, then, not fiction.

But there are difficulties. The contents of the six paper bags, which were to have furnished the much needed autobiographical information, treated of "all imaginable things under the Zodiac and above it, but of his own personal history only at rare intervals, and then in the most enigmatic manner."<sup>8</sup> The Editor is obliged to fill in the gaps with ma-

did not know what to make of the German work until Hofrath Heuschrecke came to his aid with the "so-called Biographical Documents."

<sup>7</sup> *Sartor*, p. 75

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78

terial for which he has no basis, believing with Hofrath Heuschrecke that

were the speculative scientific Truth even known, you still, in this inquiring age, ask yourself, Whence came it, and Why, and How?—and rest not, till, if no better may be, Fancy have shaped-out an answer; and either in the authentic lineaments of Fact, or the forged ones of Fiction, a complete picture and Genetical History of the Man and his spiritual Endeavour lies before you<sup>9</sup>

In this way the Editor justified his use of fiction in the "philosophico-poetically written" biography of Teufelsdröckh, while Carlyle at the same time justifies his own use of it in biography and history in general.

When approached from the standpoint of fiction and narrative, *Sartor* eludes criticism. Carlyle did not compose it as a narrative work, and its fictitious elements serve other purposes than those of the novel. As we know, Carlyle himself spoke of it as a "kind of Didactic Novel," but not without adding that its character was so manifold that it could not be classified. More like an extended book review, it becomes critical biography in the second book, and turns to prophecy in the third. Yet in each of its three major styles—the Historical-Descriptive, the Philosophical-Speculative, and the Rhapsodical-Poetic—elements of fiction contribute to the general effect. An examination of *Sartor* as fiction should therefore throw light not only upon Carlyle's now maturing views concerning fiction, but upon his development as a narrative writer.

The germinal account of Teufelsdröckh's life, like that of Wotton Reinfred's, is to be found in the letter which Carlyle wrote to Jane Welsh in December, 1822,<sup>1</sup> proposing their collaboration on an epistolary novel. Common to both plots are a young man who wrestles with spiritual doubts and a heroine who for a short time lifts him out of his despair. The letter had been long forgotten, however, and now, reviving his ambition to write a *Kunstwerk*, Carlyle takes up the story again in a third and final attempt to give it suitable expression. Not only does he subject it to much alteration in character and incident, although he writes with the manuscript of *Wotton* before him; he gives it a new application and adapts it to the Clothes Philosophy. The similarity in the lives of the two heroes is a slight one, based on a few episodes which were autobiographical in the beginning.<sup>2</sup> Subject to spiritual and philo-

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75.

<sup>1</sup> *Love Letters*, I, 122-4.

<sup>2</sup> For a list of the passages in *Sartor Resartus* which Carlyle transferred almost literally from *Wotton Reinfred*, see I. W. Dyer, *A Bibliography of Thomas Carlyle's Writings and*



sophic doubts which are only temporarily dispelled by his love for Blumine, Teufelsdröckh wanders into the mountains and valleys, seeking comfort in the wild grandeur of Nature. But he is lonelier, more mysterious, and stronger than Wotton. Of obscure origin, he has no parents to guide him in childhood, and no true friend like Bernard Swane to console him in the spiritual crisis of his early manhood. When Blumine marries Herr Towgood, whom he has thought a friend, his sorrowings are more restrained, and in his struggle against the Everlasting No he fights alone. Gifted with a Socratic wit which enables him, like Wotton, to "demolish" a loud mouthed Philistine during his first meeting with Blumine at the Waldschloss, he seems to exhibit greater intellectual power and even in his youth to give more promise of becoming an eminent philosopher.<sup>3</sup>

The portrait of Teufelsdröckh, although given through a cloud of editorial comment, shows Carlyle's maturing literary powers. Wotton was callow, emotionally unstable, prone to cry out loudly against the Fates when the trouble lay within himself, and to indulge in wild self-pitying. Teufelsdröckh seems at all times more dignified—of larger stature; and whatever complaints he may have indulged in are wisely suppressed by Carlyle, who is, as can be seen, trying to avoid emotional extravagance. There is a suavity in the English Editor which the young, recently married author of *Wotton Reinfred* did not possess. As an antidote to the "Satanic" bombast of the earlier work there is the polarizing medium of humor, through which all things are reduced to a plane.

*Ana* (Portland, Maine, 1928), p. 586, or *Sartor Resartus*, ed. C. F. Harrold, Appendix IV, p. 318. Several of these merely echo earlier ideas (*Sartor*, p. 155, *Wotton*, p. 13), one is a description of the mountain scenery through which both heroes wander (*Sartor*, p. 149, *Wotton*, p. 67), the most important recount episodes of the hero's courtship and loss of the heroine (*Sartor*, pp. 138 ff., *Wotton*, pp. 44 ff.). It cannot be said that *Wotton Reinfred* exerted any formal influence on the later work.

Autobiographic elements appear about equally in both works. *Sartor*, which omits the equivalent of Wotton's father and mother, and of his friend Bernard Swane, furnishes the Rue de l'Enfer incident, which—although "symbolical myth all"—presents a fairly accurate version of Carlyle's experience at Leith Walk.

<sup>3</sup> Carlyle's reading acquaintance with Jean Paul Richter was of assistance to him in the portrayal of Teufelsdröckh's character, which in most respects was based on his own. See Theodore Geissendoerfer, "Carlyle and Jean Paul Friedrich Richter," *Journal of English and German Philology*, xxv (1926), 540-53; A. C. Lorenz, *Diogenes Teufelsdröckh and Thomas Carlyle* (Leipzig, 1913); and H. Conrad, "Carlyle und Jean Paul," *Die Gegenwart*, xxxix (1891), 309-11.

For affinities of Teufelsdröckh with the hero of romance—the mystery that enshrouds his parentage, his birth, and his "passing," the presence of a *fidus Achates* in Heuschrecke, Teufelsdröckh's wanderings, etc.—see A. H. Upham, "Rabelaisianism in Carlyle," *Modern Language Notes*, xxxiii (1918), 411.

This was the great desideratum in *Wotton*, where, feeling that it would be out of place, Carlyle curbed his natural sense of humor in the effort to emulate Goethe.

If *Sartor* is a less spasmodic work than its predecessor, it is, superficially at least, more confused. The Editor's moderated condemnation of the "almost total want of arrangement"<sup>4</sup> in *Die Kleider* provides the excuse for his own shortcomings in this respect, and when he attempts to write a biography of Teufelsdröckh on the basis of the miscellaneous papers sent to him by Hofrath Heuschrecke he finds the matter even more difficult "Only as a gaseous chaotic Appendix to that aqueous-chaotic Volume can the contents of the Six Bags hover round us, and portions thereof be incorporated with our delineation of it."<sup>5</sup> Not only Book II, then, but the whole work, presents a strangely disorganized appearance. After his introduction the Editor seems to proceed at random, speaking now about the character of the Professor, whom he has met personally, and now about various aspects of the Clothes Volume. In the second book he is obliged to follow a similar method, quoting and commenting upon the scattered Dreams, Disquisitions, Prophecies, Anecdotes, and other Autobiographical fragments which filled the paper bags, in his effort to relate the Professor's spiritual development. Although his physical, worldly adventures are given due notice, it is always the Editor's aim to present these in such a way as to illuminate Teufelsdröckh's inner character "But amid these specialties," he writes, "let us not forget the great generality, which is our chief quest here: How prospered the inner man of Teufelsdröckh under so much outward shifting?"<sup>6</sup>

This is the anecdotal method, of which the Editor is obliged to make use not because of the Professor's fragments but because of Carlyle's proclivity to anecdote. "Man is properly the *only* object that interests man," quotes Hofrath Heuschrecke in praise of Biography. "Our whole conversation," he adds, speaking of himself and the Professor, "is little or nothing else but Biography or Auto-Biography; ever humano-anecdotal (*menschlich-anekdötisch*)."<sup>7</sup> By anecdote Carlyle means more than the narration of an episode in the life of a human being. Without some sort of moral or philosophical purport it lacks what he demands in all his writings: the power to instruct. Indeed, what he calls

<sup>4</sup> *Sartor*, p. 34.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 181.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 75-6.

anecdote is sometimes not an episode but a single significant detail involving no narrative at all.<sup>8</sup> More often it is, in the Editor's phrase, "long detail," the account of which makes vivid both action and character. Such is Teufelsdröckh's hypothetical incident of the British village of Dumdrudge which, after rearing and training thirty good men, sends them (as England had done) to Spain,<sup>9</sup> where they killed and were killed by thirty other good men from French Dumdrudge, with whom—"busy as the Devil is"—they had not the smallest quarrel. In addition to its normal function of illustrating the folly of war, this anecdote throws fresh light upon the Professor's character. "Thus can the Professor," concludes the Editor, ". . . look away from his own sorrows, over the many-coloured world, and pertinently enough note what is passing there. We may remark, indeed, that for the matter of spiritual culture, if for nothing else, perhaps few periods in his life were richer than this."<sup>1</sup>

The mystery of Teufelsdröckh's origin, being of importance to the understanding of his character and work, persuades the Editor to quote at length from the autobiographical documents which record in detail the arrival of a close-muffled Stranger at the home of Andreas Futteral and his wife, carrying a basket which he gives them, charging them with a promise and a threat to take good care of its contents.<sup>2</sup> The account is told humorously in a burlesque romance style, but so vividly and rapidly as for the moment to produce the illusion of reality.

Even more vivid is the episode of Teufelsdröckh's midnight meeting with the Russian Stranger on the North Cape. Told in detailed, first-person narrative, full of imagery and sharp contrast, it has a chiaroscuro effect; except for a slight ruddiness which the low-lying sun casts on the granite cliffs, all is silhouette in gray and black. The silence, the immense solitude of that "World Promontory," with the dark sky above and the "slow-heaving Polar Ocean" beneath, is broken suddenly by the spectral appearance of a huge figure, which challenges the young, brooding philosopher, and is by the superior argument of firearms out-

<sup>8</sup> After speaking of the many "long details" concerning Teufelsdröckh's childhood, games, presents, apparel, etc., about which "we shall here, for obvious reasons, say nothing," he continues "Perhaps, however, we may give this anecdote, considering who relates it 'My first short clothes were of yellow serge, or rather, I should say, my first short-cloth, for the vesture was one and indivisible, reaching from neck to ankle, a mere body with four limbs, of which fashion how little could I then divine the architectural, how much less the moral significance!'" *Sartor*, p. 92.

<sup>9</sup> To the Peninsular War (1808-14) against Napoleon.

<sup>1</sup> *Sartor*, pp. 174-5

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 83-4.

witted.<sup>3</sup> This anecdote, like the others, but more markedly, represents what Carlyle meant by "symbolical myth,"<sup>4</sup> but because its symbolic meaning is not immediately clear, he concludes:

Such I [Teufelsdröckh] hold to be the genuine use of Gunpowder: That it makes all men alike tall . . . Hereby, at last, is the Goliath powerless, and the David resistless; savage Animalism is nothing, inventive Spiritualism is all

Anecdote is not, however, used extensively even in the biographical second book of *Sartor*, whose aim is to establish the causal relationship between Teufelsdröckh's life—*i.e.*, his worldly and spiritual adventures—and the evolution of his Philosophy of Clothes, which it is still the purpose of the whole work to introduce to the British people. Ostensibly the contents of the six paper bags are so voluminous and obscure that the Editor is obliged to omit much, though quoting as much as possible—"considering who wrote them", and for the rest adopting the selective anecdotal method described above, or that of condensation. The Professor did not often tell his experiences in detailed narrative—the Historical Descriptive, but rather in a slower moving, reflective narrative style—the Philosophical Speculative.<sup>5</sup> In the account of his first meeting with Blumine, for example (based on the parallel episode in *Wotton Reinfred*), though there are occasional flashes of reality, the action is veiled by a mood of reminiscence. Teufelsdröckh tells it in the third person, looks back upon his youthful self with humorous sympathy, and seems bent not so much on portraying the scene as on describing its effect on the hero's heart and mind.<sup>6</sup>

In such passages of reflective narrative the action is submerged, and is to be seen only indistinctly beneath the steady current of the author's meditations. The ordinary devices of narrative are ignored. When Teufelsdröckh's romance comes to a tragic end, Carlyle tells the story in the most nondramatic way possible, so that there is no suspense and no shock of surprise on learning of Blumine's sudden and perplexing refusal to see her lover again. Conversation is completely lacking. Nor is there continuity of action. Omitting detail after detail which the realist would like to hear, filling in with "Suffice it to know that Teufelsdröckh

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 179-80

<sup>4</sup> *First Forty Years*, I, 81

<sup>5</sup> These terms define the two parts of *Die Kleider*. Historical-Descriptive, of course, refers to the narrative portions of the work, but the Philosophical Speculative attitude often affects them. *Sartor*, p. 34

<sup>6</sup> See *Sartor*, Chapter V, "Romance"

rose to the highest regions of the Empyrean . . ." and "We glance merely at the final scene,"<sup>7</sup> the Editor assumes that all has been made clear. This is an excellent method for Carlyle's purposes—to record the life of the inner Teufelsdröckh, to present philosophical ideas, and to sustain the hoax. Moreover, it suits his talents. Though he is an excellent story-teller, interested in representing his ideas in terms of human action, the ideas are always more important, and because of his lack of invention with respect to plot, passages of objective narrative are rare in those of his works in which the plot is not already determined for him by historical or biographical records.

In spite, however, of the lack of continuity of action, Book II of *Sartor* might have been what it purported to be—a narrative of ideas, in which Teufelsdröckh's worldly adventures contributed to the related development of his spiritual and philosophic character. Indeed, certain passages succeed in doing this: the account of Teufelsdröckh's "Baphometric Fire-Baptism" and that of "the first preliminary moral Act, Annihilation of Self"<sup>8</sup>—two of his most important steps toward the Everlasting Yea. Within these, as within the anecdotes, narrative is detailed, swift, vivid, and charged with an imaginative fervor which appears for the first time in *Sartor*.

The hot Harmattan wind had raged itself out; its howl went silent within me; and the long-deafened soul could not hear. I paused in my wild wanderings; and sat me down to wait, and consider; for it was as if the hour of change drew nigh. I seemed to surrender, to renounce utterly, and say: Fly, then, false shadows of Hope; I will chase you no more. And ye too, haggard spectres of Fear, I care not for you; ye too are all shadows and a lie. Let me rest here: for I am way-weary and life-weary; I will rest here, were it but to die: to die or to live is alike to me; alike insignificant. . . . Here, then, as I lay in that CENTRE of INDIFFERENCE; cast, doubtless by benignant upper Influence, into a healing sleep, the heavy dreams rolled gradually away, and I awoke into a new Heaven and a new Earth. The first preliminary moral Act, Annihilation of Self (*Selbst-tödtung*) had been happily accomplished; and my mind's eyes were now unsealed, and its hands ungyved.<sup>9</sup>

But such passages do not continue long. Either Teufelsdröckh turns to philosophic reflection, or the Editor to commentary, and the effect is destroyed. So frequent are these interruptions, so insistently do they in-

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 166-8 and 186.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 186.

trude upon the Professor's reflections, that the continuity of thought is broken as abruptly as that of action. Within the book-review frame which is never dropped, the essentially narrative material of biography is given expository treatment. The over-solicitous Editor seems unable to keep his hands out of the porridge while he stirs it; and Book II, with all its editorial comment, threatens to become a critical discussion of the papers rather than a biography of Teufelsdröckh.

Nevertheless, it is through this expository method that Carlyle avoids the pitfalls of fiction. If he had attempted to deal with Teufelsdröckh as he had dealt with Wotton, it is likely, in spite of his repeated experiments with the apprenticeship story, that there would have been little improvement. Less bombast there is, but what enables him to moderate it is the editorial method, by which extremities of emotion can be condoned, blamed, or passed over with slight notice. Since the work pretends to be biography, it is not subject to the demands of fiction; and since actually it is not biography, but fiction, various devices of the novelist may be appropriated with advantage. The diffuse, hyperbolic style and the apparent lack of organization are noted and criticized by the Editor; and by his methods of omission and condensation the paucity of episode is converted from a liability to an asset.

We have now seen that Carlyle's early interest and experiment in the field of fiction did not bring encouraging results. Though he seems for a time to have outgrown his parents' dislike of the *genre*, he did not outgrow their intense seriousness of purpose, and unlike other didactic novelists, could never bring himself to devise the minute details and incidents which make for reality. Beginning well with a short story, whose plot came to him ready made, he attempted a novel in imitation of the *Lehrjahre*, which he had translated. In spite of the fortuitous resemblance of its plot to his own life, he found it difficult to invent incident, to delineate character, and to write extended narrative. His talents are shown at their best in the realm of anecdote, in which the ambition to represent his ideas in human rather than in purely intellectual terms found some fulfilment. When he attempted *Sartor*, the old plot was resurrected, revised, and adapted to a critical, expository treatment. Though he forsook the *genre*, he consciously retained some of its features.

#### IV

SHORTLY before Carlyle started writing *Sartor Resartus* in September, 1830, his thought began to turn sharply away from fiction and toward biography and history. The change was slow and obscure, complicated

not only by seeming inconsistencies but also by the vagueness of diction more or less typical of transcendental thinkers. Not for two years did he come out clearly against fiction. Then it was a wholehearted disapproval based upon religious and philosophic ideas familiar to him from far back. The change in opinion seems to have sprung from a change in feeling, and the feeling in turn from his reading and writing at Craigenputtock. But since we are here threatened by the problem of the priority of the egg or the chicken, and since Carlyle adhered consistently to neither the opinion nor the feeling, we shall have to examine more closely the steps by which the change was effected.<sup>1</sup>

It was not novel-fiction that he now turned against. Novels from the Minerva, the Ballantyne, the Colburn presses had long since received his censure. In 1822 he had advised Jane against trying to write a novel: "It might lead your mind into a class of trivial pursuits, and bring about the bad exchange of precocity for strength."<sup>2</sup> Writing on Goethe in 1828, he made slurring reference to historical novels and declared that most fiction aimed at "furnishing a languid mind with fantastic shows and indolent emotions."<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, novels like those of Swift, Defoe, Fielding, Smollett, Goldsmith, and Scott received enthusiastic, if not long lasting, praise. Carlyle censured only certain classes of novels—not the whole *genre*. This he did not condemn before 1832. The novel that he had hoped to write with Jane Welsh in 1822 was patently intended to bring him closer to her, but *Wotton Reinfred*, as we have seen, aspired to become a novel of the higher type—a *Kunstroman*—and Carlyle stopped work on it not because he had lost faith in novels but because he had lost faith in his own ability to write a good one.

The change of opinion lay deeper, and was involved with his changing ideas on history. His early and immature dislike of history he soon outgrew. Between 1818 and 1823 history became "the basis of all true general knowledge,"<sup>4</sup> but it was nothing more, and the creative *genre* of fiction stood on a higher plane. Not until he began to perceive glimpses of the Creator through and behind reality (1830-32) did history take the ascendancy and topple fiction from her pedestal. In 1824, discussing the effect which five years of historical study and writing had had upon Schiller's character, Carlyle concluded that "the domain of his [Schiller's] mind was both enlarged and enlightened; . . . his in-

<sup>1</sup> For a partial treatment of this subject, see Shine, *op. cit.*, pp. 39-56.

<sup>2</sup> *Love Letters*, i, 91. Nevertheless, two weeks later he proposed that they should write a novel together. *Ibid.*, p. 107.

<sup>3</sup> *Essays*, i, 253-5.

<sup>4</sup> *Early Letters*, p. 293 (November 11, 1823).

tellekt was at once enriched by acquired thoughts, and strengthened by increased exercise on a wider circle of knowledge." <sup>5</sup> Thus, for Carlyle at this time, History was what it had been in 1820—what it had been for the eighteenth-century historians: the basis of all true knowledge. It increased the faculty of the understanding, but left the nobler faculty of Reason untouched. As such, Schiller found it inadequate, and so Carlyle found it after him.

But to understand was not enough for Schiller, there were in him faculties which this could not employ, and therefore could not satisfy. The primary vocation of his nature was poetry the acquisitions of his other faculties served but as the materials for his poetic faculty to act upon, and seemed imperfect till they had been sublimated into the pure and perfect forms of beauty, which it is the business of this to elicit from them <sup>6</sup>

In Schiller, at least, the highest production of the creative genius was poetic fiction, and since Carlyle does not qualify this judgment but shows sympathy with it, we may assume that he generally regarded poetic fiction as a higher form of composition than history. History, in its power to instruct, was handicapped by the meager, formless, and fragmentary character of historical material. Poetry was ideal, limited only by the limitless mind of the Artist, who, though he takes the matter of his works from the present, imposes on it a Form which—

'he will derive from a nobler time, nay, from beyond all time, from the absolute unchanging unity of his nature Here from the pure aether of his spiritual essence, flows down the Fountain of Beauty, uncontaminated by the pollutions of ages and generations, which roll to and fro in their turbid vortex beneath it His Matter caprice can dishonour as she has ennobled it; but the chaste form is withdrawn from her mutations . . . Man has lost his dignity, but Art has saved it, and preserved it for him in expressive marbles. Truth still lives in fiction, and from the copy the original will be restored.' <sup>7</sup>

While Carlyle did not agree with all that is contained in this passage it provided a philosophical basis for his own preference for fiction. Especially poetic fiction, which presented the real in the form of the ideal, excelled history as an agent of truth, and employed the noblest faculties of man. So far Carlyle believed that these noblest faculties were

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Carlyle, *The Life of Friedrich Schiller*, Centenary Edition (London, 1899), pp. 116-17.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 201-202, quoted from Schiller's *Ueber die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen*.



competent to deal with any philosophical problems history might present.

Until 1830 when, as we know, ideas on natural supernaturalism began to take hold on Carlyle's mind, he maintained this opinion almost unchanged. In the essay "Goethe" (1826), which introduced his translations of Wilhelm Meister's *Apprenticeship* and *Travels*, he said, with reference to *Faust*, that

the fiction of the poet is not falsehood, but the purest truth; and if he would lead captive our whole being, not rest satisfied with a part of it, he must address us on interests that *are*, not that *were* ours, and in a dialect which finds a response, and not a contradiction, within our bosoms.<sup>8</sup>

As Professor Shine points out, seeds of Carlyle's later thought can be found even here, in the two stipulations that (1) the poet must use contemporary interests instead of antiquated myths, and that (2) the poem should arouse responsive acceptance rather than contradiction in the reader. These seem to point toward actuality, though not necessarily away from fiction.<sup>9</sup>

In October of the next year, speaking of Shakespeare's use of fiction, Carlyle asks "Are these dramas of his not verisimilar only, but true; nay, truer than reality itself, since the essence of unmixed reality is bodied forth in them under more expressive symbols?"<sup>1</sup> Verisimilitude, then, while indispensable to fiction, does not necessarily carry with it the quality of truth, since by inference from this passage truth is an additional, and superior, quality which the Poet extracts from "unmixed reality" and exhibits to the reader through illuminating symbols. This idea that in Poetry reality is bodied forth symbolically has become one of the chief supports of his preference for fiction, but it in turn depends upon the power of the Poet to interpret that Reality.

The end of Poetry is higher she must dwell in Reality, and become manifest to men in the forms among which they live and move. And this is what we prize in Goethe and more or less in Schiller and the rest; all of whom, each in his own way, are writers of a similar aim . . . For these men have not only the clear eye, but the loving heart. They have penetrated into the mystery of Nature, after long trial they have been initiated; and to unwearied endeavour, Art has at last yielded her secret; and thus can

<sup>8</sup> Thomas Carlyle, *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship and Travels, translated from the German of Goethe*, Centenary Edition, 2 vols. (London, 1899), 1, 29

<sup>9</sup> Shine, *op cit*, p. 40

<sup>1</sup> *Essays*, 1, 51

the spirit of our Age, embodied in fair imaginations, look forth on us, earnest and full of meaning, from their works<sup>2</sup>

More and more during these years Carlyle emphasizes Reality. Poetic fiction is valueless if not based upon Reality and emblematic of it. In the same essay ("State of German Literature") he hints at the necessity of truth in Poetry.

Our Byron was in his youth but what Schiller and Goethe had been in theirs, yet the author of *Weiter* wrote *Iphigenie* and *Torquato Tasso*, and he who began with the *Robbers* ended with *Wilhelm Tell*. With longer life, all things were to have been hoped for from Byron, for he loved truth in his inmost heart, and would have discovered at last that his Corsairs and Harolds were not true<sup>3</sup>

Since Tell and Tasso both lived, truth here obviously means historical truth, and Carlyle verges on the repudiation of fiction. Not yet, however. The change comes slowly. Much depends on the poet under discussion. In November 1827 he does not like the allegories of Werner:

Abstract Ideas, however they may be put on fleshly garments, are a class of characters whom we cannot sympathize with or delight in<sup>4</sup>

When a few months later, in March 1828, he wrote an essay on Goethe's *Helena*, allegory met with his entire approval

We profess ourselves unfriendly to no mode of communicating Truth; which we rejoice to meet with in all shapes, from that of child's Catechism to the deepest poetical Allegory. Nay, the Allegory itself may sometimes be the truest part of the matter<sup>5</sup>

Werner's *Luther* was not, of course, comparable with *Faust*, and the resolution of the apparent inconsistency can be found

The grand point is to *have* a meaning, a genuine, deep, and noble one; the proper form for embodying this, the best form suited to the subject and to the author, will gather round it almost of its own accord<sup>6</sup>

Carlyle has returned to his former, abstract conception of Truth. It is this truth which Werner lacks. His characters, having no true meaning, remain hollow abstractions, Goethe's, rich in meaning, are the symbols—the visual representations—of otherwise inconceivable truths.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 1, 66

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 1, 69

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 1, 127-8

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 1, 149

<sup>6</sup> *Idem*



Oh God, it is a fearful world, this we live in, a film spread over bottomless abysses, into which no eye has perceived. (Fall of 1828.)

Is not this world a mystery, and grand with terror as well as beauty! (November 26, 1828.)<sup>3</sup>

Under the influence of Novalis, whom he studied for the second time in January 1829, Carlyle saw and felt more clearly certain profound truths of German *transcendentalism*; in particular, Novalis's disposition, noted by Tieck, "to regard the commonest and nearest as a wonder, and the strange, the supernatural as something common"<sup>4</sup> appealed to him, and helped him to formulate his doctrine of natural supernaturalism.

In spite of Carlyle's fascination by reality and his increasing interest in Society,<sup>5</sup> the positions of fiction and history remained unchanged. The dramas of Grillparzer, Klingemann, and Mullner, which gave him opportunity for such caustic humor, had little to commend them as examples of fiction. With reference to their artificiality, Carlyle wrote:

We are not contending that fiction should become fact, or that no dramatic incident is genuine, unless it could be sworn to before a jury; but simply that fiction should not be falsehood and delirium.<sup>6</sup>

Here Carlyle used the very terms with which, nearly three years later, he was to deny fiction. Fiction must become fact or it will be falsehood. Voltaire's histories are (in March 1829) praised rather grudgingly for their terse style and brilliant organization, and criticized with no reference to what Carlyle thought history ought to be. He did not yet know what history ought to be.

During the next year Carlyle had little to say about fiction. His interests in man, and man's relation to society and history, were developing rapidly, however, and taking him farther from it.<sup>7</sup> While composing "Voltaire" he wrote in his notebook:

Every living man is a visible mystery: he walks between two Eternities and two Infinitudes (said already!)—Were we not blind as moles we

<sup>3</sup> *First Forty Years*, II, 40, and note 1.

<sup>4</sup> *Essays*, II, 53.

<sup>5</sup> Shine, *op. cit.*, pp. 43-5.

<sup>6</sup> *Essays*, I, 389 (December, 1828).

<sup>7</sup> Carlyle is aware of a change (as Professor Shine notes) in his whole view of reality. See Shine, *op. cit.*, p. 42, and *Two Note Books of Thomas Carlyle*, ed. C. E. Norton, (New York, The Grolier Club, 1898), p. 132 (February 1829) and p. 148 (March 1830).

should value our Humanity at  $\infty$  [Infinity]<sup>8</sup> and our Rank, Influence, &c. (the trappings of our Humanity), at O. Say, I am a man, and you say all: whether King or Tinker is a mere appendix.<sup>9</sup>

In May and June (1829) he was thinking of writing a biography of Luther. It would be "a picture of the public Thought in those days, and of his strong lofty mind overturning and new-moulding it"<sup>1</sup>—which, if it had been written, would have shown the influence of the Hero on his age. The possibilities of biography were slowly taking shape in his mind. By October (1829) when he was writing "Jean Paul Friedrich Richter Again," he considered a biography wherein "That ideal outline of himself, which a man unconsciously shadows forth in his writings," filled up into "an actual coherent figure . . . might become one of the most dignified and valuable species of composition,"<sup>2</sup>—the emphasis resting on the *works* of the man rather than on the filling up by the biographer.

By the end of the year he declared that "Great men are the Fire-pillars in this dark pilgrimage of mankind; they stand as heavenly Signs, everliving witnesses of what had been, prophetic tokens of what may still be," and laments our limited knowledge, based on such "scanty memorials" of these great men. "The more precious . . . is such History, are such memorials, that can still in some degree preserve what had otherwise been lost without recovery."<sup>3</sup>

Although Carlyle evinced some liking for Richter's novels, he had all but forgotten fiction, and continued to grow more enthusiastic about biography and history. For the most insignificant object, the most trivial fact, he now felt reverence; for it was a window "through which solemn vistas are opened into Infinitude itself."<sup>4</sup>

Early in 1830 Carlyle was rereading and writing on Novalis, whom he considered "the most perfect of modern spirit-seers" and whom he "thanked for somewhat," but whose mystic lucubrations he did not follow satisfactorily until several months later—in March—when he could write in his notebook that he had got rid of Materialism and at-

<sup>8</sup> In C. E. Norton's edition of *Two Note Books*, p. 136, this is erroneously copied "we should value our Humanity at X." See J. A. S. Barrett, "Two Note Books of Thomas Carlyle," *Notes and Queries* (March 10, 1934), clxvi, 164-5.

<sup>9</sup> *Two Note Books*, p. 136 (March 1829). This is also, as can be seen, a germ of *Sartor Resartus*—the philosophy of clothes.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140.

<sup>2</sup> *Essays*, II, 101.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 166-7.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 198-9.

tained Idealism. Immediately below this passage appear some thoughts on poetry:

What is Poetry? Do I really love Poetry? I sometimes fancy almost not. The jingle of maudlin persons, with their mere (even genuine) 'sensitivity,' is unspeakably fatiguing to me. My greatly most delightful reading is, where some Goethe musically *teaches* me. Nay, *any* fact, relating especially to man, is still valuable and pleasing<sup>5</sup>

Professor Shine rightly sees in this passage an "imagined distaste for poetry" which was at least "partly due to the fictional element usually contained in poetry."<sup>6</sup> It is but an adumbration of Carlyle's distrust of poetic fiction, which at first he seems to have felt unconsciously rather than realized clearly in his mind. Because the distrust was more a feeling than a thought, he could not perceive that this was what caused him to doubt the value of poetry. Actually, poetry was in no danger, for the only kind that he specifically objected to was the sentimental, jingly kind which, if asked, he certainly would not have called poetry. Moreover, his preference for reading which "*musically teaches*" (to change the italics) implies an unceasing devotion to that kind of poetry which, like Goethe's, delighted the ear and informed the mind.

Although Poetry was not in danger, fiction was. Even "genuine"—*i.e.*, verisimilar—sentiment seemed to have lost its appeal for him. In 1830 many things pointed toward a general repudiation of fiction. In March a more explicit statement of natural supernaturalism appeared in his essay "On History." This was but another step, however, toward the end he was so far only groping for. History, though "a real prophetic manuscript . . . can be fully interpreted by no man," and the historian is advised to aim "only at some picture of the things acted," though realizing that his work "will at best be a poor approximation."<sup>7</sup> So much emphasis was put by Carlyle on the necessity of the historian's being an Artist—not an artisan, or journalist—who can "inform and ennoble the humblest department with an Idea of the Whole" that nothing is said of Truth, Fact, the wonder of Reality—themes which he is soon to consider vital to a discussion of historiography.

Social and religious interests were also militating against his regard for fiction. In May he reflected on the interdependence of men in society; Christianity, like "every truly vital interest of mankind," was a thing that grew. A letter from the Saint-Simonians praised his essay

<sup>5</sup> *Two Note Books*, p. 151.

<sup>6</sup> Shine, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

<sup>7</sup> *Essays*, II, 89-90.

"Signs of the Times" (July 1829) and represented social ideas which Carlyle thought "not without a large spicing of truth;" in July he understood more clearly that "*Man is a spirit*" and that "invisible influences run thro' *Society*, and make it a mysterious whole, full of Life and inscrutable activities and capabilities. Our individual existence is a mystery; our social still more." Carlyle's ideas on Society were, in fact, so spiritual that he half-humorously warned himself against mysticism. "Thou . . . wilt live in the daylight (rush light?) of Truth, and see thy world and understand it;"<sup>8</sup> in September society is the "wonder of wonders" and politics the noblest science.<sup>9</sup> These thoughts are partial evidence of Carlyle's deep speculation on society which resulted in the writing of "Thoughts on Clothes" (September–October 1830) and which assisted in his ultimate estrangement from fiction.

In the spring of the next year Carlyle, reconsidering the question he had discussed in "On History," resolved it. "What is a *Whole*?" he asked himself "Or how, specially, *does* a Poem differ from Prose?" This, again, he did not think through "Ask not a definition of it in words. . . . Study to create in thyself a *feeling* of it like so much else, it cannot be made clear, hardly even to thy thought(?)." The feeling soon came to him, for next he wrote:

I see some vague outline of what a *Whole* is also how an individual Delineation may be 'informed with the Infinite'; may appear hanging in the universe of Time & Space (partly) in which case is it a Poem and a Whole? Therefore, are the true Heroic Poems of these times to be written with the *ink of Science*? Were a correct philosophic Biography of a man (meaning by philosophic *all* that the name can include) the only method of celebraung him? The true History (had we any such, or even generally any dream of such) the true Epic Poem?—I partly begin to surmise so.—What after all is the true proportion of St. Matthew to Homer, of the Crucifixion to the Fall of Troy!<sup>1</sup>

In this passage many of Carlyle's ideas can be seen taking clearer shape. Without subjecting it too rigidly to logical analysis we may infer that what he meant by a whole was something that is poetic. If it was not poetic it could not be a whole; and nothing that was not a whole, whatever its form, could be poetic—but only prose. Since History was "the

<sup>8</sup> *Two Note Books*, pp. 155–60 *passim*.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 187–8 For the idea that poetry must have "infinitude" (*Unendlichkeit*) in it, see *Letters of Carlyle to Mill, Sterling, and Browning*, ed. Alexander Carlyle (London, 1923), p. 59, where Carlyle says he got it from "the Kantians with Schiller at their head." This is what makes art whole, and what makes it musical.

true Epic Poem" the quality of the "poetic" must depend on the actual. Poetry must be based upon fact, not upon fiction, must be made historical, while at the same time history must be made poetical. That is, the finite "individual Delineation" must be informed with the infinite, described not as an isolated or a localized incident but with reference to its position in Time and Space. Since this could be done only if the incident was one that actually happened, fiction was excluded from both history and poetry, which were now, in Carlyle's mind, identical.<sup>2</sup>

All the elements of Carlyle's thought on fiction had now found expression. He had turned theoretically from fiction to fact and, except for moments of critical relaxation, adopted a condemnatory attitude toward all fictitious composition. Such moments, we shall find, were neither few nor inconsiderable, but first let us examine the nature of this attitude.

After the spring and summer of 1831, when Carlyle was laboring at *Sartor Resartus*, the progress of his thoughts was interrupted by his trip to London (August 3, 1831—March 25, 1832) where he hoped to sell the finished work. There, after writing "Characteristics" in December, he turned by way of Boswell's *Johnson* to the subject of biography. Written in January 1832, Carlyle's essay on biography gives full public expression to his antifictional views.

'Fiction, while the feigner of it knows that he is feigning, partakes, more than we suspect, of the nature of *lying*'

'Belief is, indeed, the beginning and first condition of all spiritual Force whatsoever. only in so far as Imagination, were it but momentarily, is *believed*, can there be any use or meaning in it, any enjoyment of it. . . .'

' . . . Of the Supernatural in an Epic Poem . . . the instant it has ceased to be authentically supernatural, and become what you call "machinery": sweep it out of sight!'

'But what if the *impossible* being once for all quite discarded, the probable be well adhered to: how stands it with fiction *then*? Why, then, I would say, the evil is much mended but nowise completely cured. We have then, in place of the wholly dead modern Epic, the partially living modern Novel.'

' . . . The highest exercise of Invention has, in very deed, nothing to do with Fiction; but is an invention of new Truth, what we can call a *Revelation*.'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See also Shine, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

<sup>3</sup> *Essays*, III, 49-54.



Two things are to be noticed from these passages: first, that they are all quoted from the hypothetical *Aesthetische Springwurzeln*, a deep philosophical work by the hypothetical Professor Gottfried Sauerteig, and consequently that in his first direct repudiation of fiction Carlyle employed a fictitious device; and second, that he now classed the materials of fiction as either "impossible" or "probable," but not as "true." Fiction was bereft of its power to convey truth; its only virtue was verisimilitude—a quality that we have seen Carlyle disparage.<sup>4</sup> Although certain novels, like *Tom Jones*, *Wilhelm Meister*, *Robinson Crusoe*, "will yield no little solacement to the minds of men," they do not spring from the belief of the author, are not based on Reality, and are therefore worthy of "only momentary credence."<sup>5</sup> Thus Carlyle's passion for reality, deepened by a religious sense, led him toward the abandonment of his former gods. He revered the past almost sentimentally, regarded "the smallest historical fact" as far more important than "the grandest fictitious event,"<sup>6</sup> Defoe, Fielding, Smollett, lost caste; Homer was "a partially *hollow* and false singer," even the fictions of Shakespeare were soon to be slighted.<sup>7</sup> Novelists were advised to "sweep their Novel fabric into the dust-cart, and betake them with such faculty as they have to understand and record what is *true*."<sup>8</sup> By January 1832 the change in Carlyle's opinions on fiction and history seemed complete. The more ardently he honored fact, truth, Reality, the more vigorously he attacked falsity, fiction, and Imagination. With certain exceptions he continued to attack them in his works for the rest of his life.<sup>9</sup>

Carlyle did not turn wholly against fiction, however. The exceptions are too glaring to be ignored. In April 1832, after he had abjured fiction and proclaimed his allegiance to fact, he wrote several essays on Goethe in which he made it clear that there was some fiction that was not falsehood. To Carlyle, Goethe was still a "true Poet" and more than ever a Seer, "whose eye has been gifted to discern the godlike Mystery of God's Universe, and decipher some new lines of its celestial writ-

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 277, and III, 53

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 50, 52

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 78, 79

<sup>7</sup> *Letters to Mill, Sterling and Browning*, p. 57 (June 13, 1833)

<sup>8</sup> *Essays*, III, 178

<sup>9</sup> See *The Correspondence of Thomas Carlyle and Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1834-1872*, 2 volumes (Boston, 1883), I, 93 (April 29, 1836), Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present*, Centenary Edition (London, 1899), p. 46 (1843), *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, Centenary Edition, p. 322-3 (1850), *History of Frederick the Great*, Centenary Edition, I, I, 18, 431 (Vol. 1 written 1854), *Essays*, v ("Shooting Niagara"), 24-5 (1867)

ing."<sup>1</sup> Although Carlyle laid great emphasis on Goethe's "spiritual Endowment," on the "melodious Reverence" and Faith visible in his works,<sup>2</sup> no aspersions were cast on fiction either in general or in particular, and Goethe was, along with Shakespeare, praised for his creative genius. Their poetic fictions were true:

What are the *Hamlets* and *Tempests*, the *Fausts* and *Mignons*, but glimpses accorded us into this translucent, wonder-encircled world; revelations of the mystery of all mysteries, Man's life as it actually is?

Their fictitious characters are lifelike and alive:

Those Macbeths and Falstaffs, accordingly, these Fausts and Philinas have a verisimilitude and life that separates them from all other fictions of late ages.<sup>3</sup>

It is the poet's faculty of "figurativeness," what Carlyle once (1828) called his "emblematic intellect,"<sup>4</sup> which, if the poet is a seer (and "the true Poet is ever, as of old, the Seer")<sup>5</sup> enables him to represent truth in imaginary shape. We may conclude, then, that in July 1832 fiction was not entirely deprived of its power to convey truth. When on the subject of Shakespeare and Goethe, Carlyle all but forgot his dislike of fiction, which was so far not sweeping enough to overthrow these idols.

In August of the same year, fulfilling a promise he had made to the public in March 1828<sup>6</sup> to publish a translation of Goethe's *Das Mährchen*, Carlyle once more did homage to fiction. The translation itself had been made seven years before, while Carlyle was at work on *German Romance*. He now named Diogenes Teufelsdröckh as the translator, supplied it with a breezy, spoofing introduction, and added some interpretive notes in which the editor (O. Y. = "Oliver Yorke") heckles the "poor Translator." The method is similar to that of *Sartor*: O. Y., alternating between admiration and contempt, served to predispose the reader in favor of Carlyle's own ideas. These are in the nature of a commentary on the fantastic allegory which Goethe himself meant only as a piece of legerdemain, lacking any consistent inner meaning.<sup>7</sup> Mrs.

<sup>1</sup> *Essays*, II, 377.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 430-31.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 438.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 244.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 377.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 196.

<sup>7</sup> *Wilson*, II, 166-7.

Carlyle, however, took it seriously. Apparently Carlyle did too,<sup>8</sup> though the editorial fanfare that accompanied it indicates that he realized the extravagance of his assertions. Teufelsdröckh, always used as a shock-absorber for Carlyle's radical-sounding ideas, declares *Das Mahrchen* to be "the deepest Poem of its sort in existence . . . the only true Prophecy emitted for who knows how many centuries."<sup>9</sup> The editor echoes this judgment, and when Teufelsdröckh finds his theory of natural supernaturalism in the allegory, we may be sure Carlyle was serious enough to mean what he said, however gaudily he may have dressed his meaning in "oratory."<sup>1</sup> It becomes clear from other judgments in the same tenor that Carlyle has still a great respect for fiction. The tale is described as a

phantasmagoric Adumbration . . . wherein things the most heterogeneous are, with homogeneity of figure, emblemed forth; which would require not one key to unlock it, but, at different stages of the business, a dozen successive keys . . . a wonderful EMBLEM OF UNIVERSAL HISTORY . . . more especially a wonderful Emblem of this our wonderful and woful 'Age of Transition;' what men have been and done, what they are to be and do, is, in this Tale of Tales, poetico prophetically typified, in such a style of grandeur and celestial brilliancy and life, as the Western Imagination has not elsewhere reached.<sup>2</sup>

In this passage Carlyle reveals a liking for poetic fiction of the allegorical type, and for the poet's imagination which (although without belief) "emblems forth" truth.

Carlyle's inconsistency here, in view of his recent repudiation of fiction, is mainly an apparent one.<sup>3</sup> Hero worship for Goethe as the true Poet and Prophet of the age certainly explains some of it, but apart from this one can detect a difference between his attitude toward fiction in 1828 and his present attitude. *Das Mahrchen* attracted him because he saw in it the allegorical representation of so many ideas which were then becoming clear to him. It was possible to identify the Giant with Superstition, the Ferryman with Priesthood, the Hut with the Church, the River with Time, one side of the river with the world of Naturalism and the other with the world of Supernaturalism. The Tale il-

<sup>8</sup> See *Letters to Mill, Sterling, and Browning*, p. 23.

<sup>9</sup> *Essays*, II, 479.

<sup>1</sup> See *Two Note Books*, pp. 203-204.

<sup>2</sup> *Essays*, II, 448-9.

<sup>3</sup> Professor Shine writes "Perhaps his most inexplicable infringement of judgment, even in favor of Goethe, was his effort at crystal gazing into this *Tale of Tales* . . ." *Op. cit.*, p. 41, note 18.

illustrated not only his clothes philosophy but also his doctrine of natural supernaturalism.

To get a free solid communication established over this same wondrous River of Time, so that the Natural and Supernatural may stand in friendliest neighbourhood and union, forms the grand action and summary of Universal History; the one problem of Human Culture; the thing which Mankind . . . has striven after, and must ever strive after?<sup>4</sup>

Poetic fiction, then, was on a level with historic truth if it "bodied forth" such truth. Only true facts and seers could do this, like Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe

In April 1833 ("Cagliostro") Carlyle discussed the importance of the poet's imagination in the composition of history.

'Stern accuracy in inquiring, bold Imagination in expounding and filling-up; these' says friend Sauerteig, 'are the two pinions on which History soars.'

Of these two pinions, Imagination, said to be the larger,<sup>5</sup> opens the way to another kind of poetic fiction which Carlyle still admires. If details are lacking in completeness, the historian may use his imaginative faculty to fill in the gaps with invented material which has the support of his belief. This, however, is a different kind of fiction—merely imaginative detail to fill out a portrait or to make a transition between successive incidents.

There is a third kind of fiction that Carlyle admits fictitious device. A part of his sense of humor was his proclivity and talent for playful deception. The creation of characters like Teufelsdröckh and Sauerteig for mouthpieces, his disguised self quoting, and the elaborate editorial gambols were, as we have seen, dear to his heart. Such devices were common in a day when the assumption of anonymity was common in periodicals, but Carlyle made original use of the opportunities thus offered to enhance the startling character of his ideas. One of the great problems confronting man was to find out what he could do and to do it. "Here in London," Carlyle discovered, "lies a second problem often harder than the first: having done thy work, *convince the world*

<sup>4</sup> *Essays*, II, 449-50

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 259-60. A similar idea had already been given expression in *Sartor*, where, though the details of Teufelsdröckh's life are not complete, the editor will "rest not, till, if no better may be, Fancy have shaped out an answer, and either in the authentic lineaments of Fact, or the forged ones of Fiction, a complete picture and Genetical History of the man and his Spiritual Endeavour lies before you." *Sartor Resartus*, p. 75

*that thou hast done it*"<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, these devices were not to be associated with the highest art; they served merely to attract or hold the reader's attention. What Carlyle wanted to do in the world was to "spread abroad Reverence over the hearts of men." In his notebook he asked, "Is it to be done by Art; or are men's minds as yet shut to Art, and open only at best to oratory; not fit for a *Meister*, but only for a better and better *Tenfeltsdreck*?"<sup>7</sup> That is, can he attempt to spread reverence by writing the purest art, like Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, or must he aim at something lower, another and better *Sartor*, using all the devices with which he hoped to make it more palatable to the public? His fondness for them continued long after this. Sauerteig is quoted on history, war, and miscellaneous topics as late as *Frederick the Great* (1858-65). In 1834 (January 20), however, writing to John Stuart Mill, he said

I approve greatly of your purpose to discard Cant and Falsehood of all kinds yet there is a kind of Fiction which is not Falsehood, and has more effect in addressing men than many a Radical is aware of. This has struck me much of late years in considering *Blackwood* and *Fraser*, both these are furnished as it were with a kind of theatrical costume, with orchestra and stage lights, and thereby alone have a wonderful advantage. For nothing was ever truer than this *Ubi homines sunt modi sunt*, a maxim which grows with me in significance the longer I meditate it.<sup>8</sup>

An author is justified, then, in employing fictitious devices to meet the tastes of his particular reading public, and even though such devices are deceptive no falsehood is involved, since their ultimate purpose is to convey truth more readily.

We have seen that there were three exemptions from Carlyle's blanket repudiation of fiction in 1832: (1) The works of Poet Seers like Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, and Goethe, (2) Imaginative detail for filling in where source material was deficient; (3) The use of fictitious device to facilitate the teaching of truth. The third does not really touch on the main problem of truth and fiction and may be dismissed. The second is important because it opens the way for fictionalized biography and fictionalized history, which Carlyle hated and strove to avoid. The first, though it is to be explained as residual from his former admiration

<sup>6</sup> *Two Note Books*, p. 208 (October 22, 1831).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 203-204. There is a question of interpretation in connection with this passage. Hill Shine (*op cit.*, p. 58) takes "oratory" to refer to the idea of lecturing which entered Carlyle's mind around this time. The last two clauses of the passage do not seem consistent with this view.

<sup>8</sup> *Letters to Mill, Sterling, and Browning*, p. 93.

for fiction, natural in the course of such an intellectual and emotional change of opinion, also offers some contradiction. For Carlyle, after denying fiction the power to convey truth, turned about, not to his former admiration for true-to-life fiction, but to an admiration for various works of fiction written by certain heroes of literature. He was not, however, to practise such favoritism consistently. In a year fiction of the highest kind was restricted to that which based itself on historic truth: Goethe's *Tasso*, *Iphigenie*, and *Gross-Kophta*, the *Iliad* of Homer, Shakespeare's histories. On this basis, fiction has a new meaning, and resembles emblematic history—that is, history in which historic fact is utilized to body forth historic truths, where the finite is infused with a sense of the infinite. But it was not often that fiction with such a basis, such a meaning, could be found, and the term fiction, applied to imaginative works, came into increasing disfavor as Carlyle's conception and love of fact deepened.

At this time Carlyle began to lose faith in Goethe as a prophet. The loss was never to be complete, for Goethe retained his position in Carlyle's opinion as a great poet, who had nevertheless failed to have any following, the influence of whose thought was no longer active. Little concerned with German literature during the year 1833, Carlyle had begun to outgrow its influence and to build new ideas on the aims and nature of history. In May 1834 Goethe stood out

as an object *finished*, to which there will be no *continuation* made; like a granite Promontory, high and sheer, stretching far into the waste chaos; yet not thro' it, thro' it the world seems seeking itself *another* road, or losing all aim of any<sup>9</sup>

Before this he had felt that from the books on the French Revolution which John Stuart Mill had sent him he might draw "the highest kind of writing, far higher than any kind of Fiction even of the Shakespeare sort."<sup>1</sup> On April 28, 1834, he confessed to John Stuart Blackie the conviction (which had been growing on him for some time) that

'Faust' is intrinsically but a small poem, perhaps the smallest of Goethe's main works . . . for Time at large of very limited value . . . I find considerably more meaning in the *Second Part*!<sup>2</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Carlyle, 'New Letters of Carlyle to Eckermann,' ed. W. A. Speck, *The Yale Review*, n.s. xv, 744 (Letter of May 6, 1834). See also *Letters*, p. 378, for an earlier expression (October 1, 1833) of this change, and *Heroes and Hero Worship*, Centenary Edition, pp. 157-8, for a later. See also Shine, *op. cit.*, pp. 78-9.

<sup>1</sup> *Letters to Mill, Sterling, and Browning*, p. 57 (June 13, 1833).

<sup>2</sup> A. M. Stoddart, *John Stuart Blackie, a Biography*, 2 volumes (Edinburgh, 1895), 1, 148-9.

And on the same day, writing to an Edinburgh friend about his recent reading of Homer, he declared that he loved it "better than any other Book, . . . except the Bible alone."<sup>3</sup> These opinions became permanent parts of his thought.

So, not until two years after he had first renounced fiction did he succeed in renouncing its prophets. All his opinions were consistent with the basic Scottish conviction that a thing that actually happened is better than a thing that is only imagined. Carlyle would not have agreed to Hobbes's maxim that "To be pleased in the fiction of that, which would please a man if it were real, is a Passion . . . adherent to the Nature . . . of man"<sup>4</sup> Behind the thing that happened, Carlyle sensed the workings of the Almighty; behind the thing imagined, he could see at most a mortal intellect. If that intellect belonged to a Shakespeare, or a Homer, or a Goethe, the thing imagined was nevertheless two steps removed from the Almighty and therefore was inferior to any fact about that intellect. As late as April 1836 Carlyle felt that his love of fact was still growing.<sup>5</sup> The more it grew, the sterner became his attitude toward fiction and the more exalted became his conception of history.

Before 1832, when Carlyle admired fiction, he saw in it reality bodied forth in symbols that clarified and explained it. Although the realization of his inability to write fiction had been fully brought home to him and he knew that his forte lay in the less creative province of historical narrative, it was not until he began to feel the wonder of Reality that he came to regard facts as superior to fictional symbols for the clarification and explanation of Truth. This was based partly on his belief in God as the divine author of all human and worldly events, in history as a divine revelation of this God. Any human being who tried to fabricate imitations of these events was vainly attempting to take God's place—assuming an omniscience that was beyond human attainment. Facts were themselves symbols. "Facts are engraved Hieroglyphs, for which

<sup>3</sup> *Letters*, p. 392, letter to Henry Inglis. Thus the *Iliad*, once considered partly fiction, is now poetic history and pure truth. This total denial of what Carlyle used to regard as the greatest works of fiction is not even now to survive without exceptions. Shakespeare often recovers grace, as in *Heroes and Hero Worship* (1841), and Goethe also. Both are divinely gifted seers, wonderfully able to reveal the highest truth. Curiously, Carlyle's increasing dislike of all fiction seems not to have affected his fondness for certain novelists like Smollett, whose pathos was unsurpassed "by Dante or any one else." See Moncure D. Conway, *Thomas Carlyle* (New York, 1881), pp. 32-3. But these and others like them are occasional judgments, and do not indicate a change of opinion on fiction.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Everyman Edition (1914), p. 154 (Part II, Chapter 27).

<sup>5</sup> *Correspondence of Carlyle and Emerson*, I, 93 (April 29, 1836).

the fewest have the key."<sup>6</sup> Truth lies behind these hierograms, which are God-made. The writer of fiction, if he were to convey truth through fictitious hierograms, would have to understand truth. This is all but impossible, since even men of genius—the Poet-Seers—get only glimpses of it. Only God can interpret to Man the course of events which He directs and through which He reveals Himself to those whom He has endowed with genius. The greatest achievement possible to man was the partial discovery and partial representation of truth as discoverable in history—the handwriting of God Fiction, which to Carlyle was no more than man's vain attempt to ape God by fancying his own little "history" on an infinitesimal scale, could therefore be hardly more than a pack of errors and lies. History based on God made hierograms, even without complete interpretation, was infinitely superior to fiction, which could be based only on man made hierograms. Until 1833 Carlyle felt that Goethe, as a true prophet in literature, had so profound an emblematic intellect that he could, like Shakespeare, create his own symbols for the illustrations of truth. When Goethe fell from this high station, though only slightly, and when Shakespeare's histories were preferred to his other dramas, there was no one left to exonerate man-made hierograms, and no *raison d'être* for fiction as a literary genre. In four years he had redefined both fiction and history. Fiction, from being the symbolic representation of truth, was reduced to kinship with lying. History, from its lowly position as instructor to the understanding, was elevated to parity with poetry and religion. In the course of its rise it had appropriated much that had belonged to fiction, for now it was history that symbolized truth. If it did so by means of Fact and not of fabrication, it bore the responsibility of presenting that fact as "impressively" as any novelist presented his fabrication. Although Carlyle did not consider verisimilitude a sign of the highest art, his criticism in "Biography," "Boswell's Johnson," and "The Diamond Necklace"<sup>7</sup> of histories that are not verisimilar indicates its importance in the kind of history he wanted to write. For the attainment of this quality the extensive use of fictional methods and fictitious details was permissible and, considering the inadequate nature of historical materials, even necessary.

<sup>6</sup> *Sartor Resartus*, p. 203.

<sup>7</sup> *Essays*, III, 58-61, 80, 326.





## Browning and the Spirit of Greece

By WILLIAM C. DeVANE

IT is evident that in the revival of interest in Greece and her literature in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries we are face to face with a movement of thought that is vast in its scope, and deep and subtle in its significance. Its course in England has only recently been charted in Professor Douglas Bush's brilliant book, *Mythology and the Romantic Tradition*, published in 1937. The reasons for the Greek Revival in England late in the eighteenth century are complex and obscure and, I am happy to say, are no part of this paper. But a few bold strokes to fill in the background may properly be made. First, the Greek Revival was international in scope, and was a part of the gigantic Romantic Movement in Europe, a movement whose existence in point of time the Greek Revival parallels closely. The Greek Revival was, perhaps, the crowning achievement of the tremendous and desperate movement known as Primitivism, whereby a whole generation of men strove to renew the youth of the race—to replace the desiccated and mechanical philosophies of a century, to reanimate, as it were, an old corpse with young blood. It is instructive to watch the rising of the bardic theories about Homer as they formulate themselves in the climate of opinion of the later eighteenth century. In them, Homer becomes a ballad-maker, an extemporizing bard, who lived among and wrote about simple and spontaneous people, as yet not entirely spoiled by sophistication; they were like the people Burns was presently to write about or, later, Wordsworth's dalesmen and shepherds. Second, the Greek Revival more immediately came to England from Germany, for Germany during a few decades was mad about all things Greek, as one may see from Miss E. M. Butler's book, *The Tyranny of Greece Over Germany*, published in 1935. In Germany, the Greek Revival reckoned such names as Lessing, Herder, Winckelmann, Schiller, and Goethe, to name only a few. Hellenism became the new religion for the time. But German Hellenism owed its origins in large part to English thinkers and poets. Greek studies had flourished in the English

universities since the days of Sir John Cheke. In turning back to Hellenism, though the impetus came from Germany, England was turning again to its own. Even in a meager time Chesterfield could say to his son that a knowledge of Greek and Latin were the hallmarks of literacy, and add, "It is Greek that must distinguish you in the learned world, Latin alone will not."<sup>1</sup> But Dryden, Pope, and Bentley were gone, and Parr and Porson not yet come, and Chesterfield could suggest to his son, Philip, that he might prepare himself for a Greek professorship: "It is a very pretty sinecure, and requires very little knowledge (much less than, I hope, you have already) of that language."<sup>2</sup> But for all that, Greek culture was a sturdy stock in England, as Parson Adams exhibits, and was only waiting for the spring to bring it to blossom. Then came the spring with rose in hand. The early music for her coming was provided by Wordsworth and Coleridge, the full orchestra by Byron, Shelley, and Keats.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century Cicero is everywhere giving way before Plato, and Virgilian propriety is surrendering to Homeric genius. In the course of the century there is a surprising orderliness in the manner in which Greek literature is exploited. For example, among the Greek dramatists the Titanism of Aeschylus is most appreciated and used by Byron, Shelley, and the younger Landor; later, Sophocles attracts the older Landor and Matthew Arnold; later still, Euripides finds his belligerent supporter in Browning, and his imitator (in spite of his anathema) in Swinburne. Perhaps it is stretching things too far to suggest the faint parallel between Aristophanes and W. S. Gilbert. This is a fancy which it will not do to press too far, and I must get on to the matter in hand, which is to see how the Greek Revival struck Browning and his fellow Victorians.

The Victorians are, of course, the second guests to dine at that table, and the best wine was not saved till now. But plenty of food was left, and the Victorian poets received it gratefully, if not always heartily. To desert the figure, the Victorian poets carried on in their fashion the Greek Revival, and some of the best work of Landor, Tennyson, Arnold, Mrs. Browning, Browning, Morris, Swinburne, Meredith, and Hardy owes its origin to Greek literature, or to Greek model. But half-way down the century Greek myth and story and influence are troubled by a spirit, which though often laid, came to haunt the pagans again. This

<sup>1</sup> *Letters of Philip Dormer Stanhope*, fourth Earl of Chesterfield, ed. Dobrée, 1932, IV, 1610. This letter was written in 1750. For general background consult Bush, Ch. I.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 1084.

was the spirit of Christianity, which objected with what violence it could to the excessive admiration of Hellenism. In the Renaissance, Spenser had made his peace between Greece and Judea, as one may see in *The Faerie Queene* and the *Epithalamion*. Milton had had to take a stronger line, as one may see in this passage on Hæphæstus, drawn from Homer.

His hand was known  
In Heaven by many a towered structure high,  
Where scepter'd Angels held their residence,  
And sat as Princes, whom the supreme King  
Exalted to such power, and gave to rule,  
Each in his hierarchy, the Orders bright.  
Nor was his name unheard or unadored  
In ancient Greece, and in Ausonian land  
Men called him Mulciber, and how he fell  
From Heaven they fabled, thrown by angry Jove  
Sheer o'er the crystal battlements. from morn  
To noon he fell, from noon to dewy eve,  
A summer's day, and with the setting sun  
Dropt from the zenith, like a falling star,  
On Lemnos, the Ægean isle Thus they relate,  
Erring; for he with this rebellious rout  
Fell long before, nor aught availed him now  
To have built in Heaven high towers, nor did he scape  
By all his engines, but was headlong sent,  
With his industrious crew, to build in Hell.

But enough of this for the moment. It purples too much my mere gray argument, and I wish to deal with it later, because in some respects Browning is at the center of the conflict between Hellenism and Christianity in the nineteenth century as Milton had been in the seventeenth. Later in the century, too, the Greek muses on Parnassus have to make way for those terrible muses, Astronomy and Geology, and, one might add, Anthropology.

In treating my specific subject, Browning and the spirit of Greece, I do not mean to make a systematic survey of all Browning's dealings in Greek things, nor do I mean to trace anew Browning's indebtedness to Classical authors. That has already been done twice—first by Thurman L. Hood in *Browning's Ancient Classical Sources* in 1922, and again by Robert Spindler in *Robert Browning und die Antike* in 1930. In what follows, I wish to do three things: first, to comment briefly upon Brown-

ing's relation to his favorite Greek poet, Euripides; second, to point out the uses to which Browning puts his favorite Greek myth, that of Andromeda; and third, to remark upon Browning's place in the conflict between Hellenism and Christianity in his time. But before I begin upon the first I wish to make a few general statements upon Browning as a Hellenic

The most remarkable fact is that Browning ever had any dealings with the Greek spirit at all, for his temperament and his habit of mind are anything but Greek. If, by some magic, he could have been transported into the age of Pericles, he would have been considered a barbarian in Athens. Browning had no systematic training in Greek literature—he was mainly self taught—and but for the climate of opinion in his time, he probably would not have learned Greek at all. It is true that his father was a scholar and knew Greek, and that the boy was soon dramatizing Pope's *Iliad* in his games, and it is true that his first work, *Pauline*, is filled with fragments of antique myth and poetry—he recalls Agamemnon "Treading the purple calmly to his death," and sees in his imagination "the dim clustered isles in the blue sea," but most of his classical lore in that Shelleyan Byronic Bunyanesque confession are drawn from the romantic storehouses of Ovid, dear to Milton and Spenser. The most truly Greek poem that Browning ever composed was the "fragment of an Hippolytus," *Artemis Prologuizes*, which Arnold praised, and Mr. Sturge Moore called "perhaps the most splendid 120 lines of blank verse in English."<sup>3</sup> The fragment is most unlike Browning, and it has been observed that he wrote it when he was in bed with a fever. There is wit and judgment in Mr. Bush's remark that "it needed illness to make Browning a classicist." Here for once he was able to achieve objective classicality, and, I think, never again. He was indeed not a ripe scholar and artist in Greek things, but was instead what Mr. Bush calls him, a "prodigious and barbarian amateur." His imagination was utterly un-Hellenic. He was, as Arnold said, absorbed in multitudinousness, and the breathless energy that he brought to bear upon everything fits strangely upon the still, static reverence for the eternal and unchanging law which was the spirit of Greek literature. Upon other English poets, Shelley, Arnold, Tennyson, and even Keats, the Greek spirit worked for order, simplicity, unity of effect. But Browning's heart was in the present, in the spectacle of contemporary humanity, in concrete and vivid actualities, in the scrutiny of human mo-

<sup>3</sup> "The Best Poetry," in *Transactions of the Royal Society of Literature*, Second Series, XXX, 42

tives, in the development of a soul from weakness to strength. He brought realistic detail into the antique world, along with the most anachronistic ideas and interpretations. This urgency and multitudinousness were more than Greek myth and story could bear, with the possible exception of those of Euripides. If the result is disconcerting, we can at least say that Browning gave a blood transfusion to a kind of poetry that was in perpetual danger of dying a graceful death from anemia.

The thing that set Browning about the vindication of Euripides, "the human," in 1870 was the body of critical aspersion upon that poet in the late 'Sixties.<sup>4</sup> Of course the memory of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's predilection for Euripides played its part, and a great part. But it was inevitable in his temperament that if he had to choose among the Greek poets, he would have chosen Euripides, for Euripides was the least Hellenic of the greater figures of Greek literature in his realism and his psychology. It was equally inevitable that whatever poet Browning chose would be made over in his own image, with a great wealth of erudite accuracy in his background, and with his strong, but partial, intuition and insight in the characters. The Greece that Browning gives us in *Balaustion's Adventure* and in *Aristophanes' Apology* is at once extremely real and extremely unreal. The facts of Browning's poems are authentic products of his research and his eye for realism—they are tangible, but, as Professor Bush says "when 'the lyric girl,' Balaustion, the enthusiastic devotee of Euripides, is brought forward to win over the Syracusans by reciting *Alcestis*, we may, without disparaging her radiant charm, scan Greek records in vain for such a mixture of bluestocking and Girl Guide. To find her we must repair to Wimpole Street, and her young masculine admirer on the temple steps had once sat beside a sofa there. Euripides was Browning's choice among the Greeks, and the reasons for it were that Euripides came nearest to being what Browning was: the realist, the psychologist, the special pleader for lost souls, the champion of women, the critic of commonly received opinions, the progressive moralist of his day. In his treatment of Euripides' *Alcestis* modern critics have disagreed about the fidelity of Browning's transcript, and especially about Browning's judgments upon the characters of Admetus and Alcestis. Mr. Gilbert Murray evidently thinks that Browning's analysis of Admetus as a cowardly, selfish man who is redeemed by his loss and suffering is essentially Euripidean. Mr. E. A. Parker in his edition of *Balaustion's Adventure*,

<sup>4</sup> See De Vane, *A Browning Handbook*, 1935, pp. 311, 334-5.

<sup>5</sup> Bush, *Mythology and the Romantic Tradition*, 1937, p. 366.

published in 1928, thinks that Browning has misunderstood Euripides, and that the Greek dramatist had presented Admetus in a semi-satyrical play with a happy ending, as an ideal king according to the standards of his time, who has a right to expect his relatives, friends, and subjects to sacrifice themselves for his life and is saved from a great loss only because he is great enough to put the Greek virtue of hospitality above that of private sorrow. The argument still continues, but it seems that Browning's view is at present a little in the ascendancy. But it is not so much in the translation of the *Alcestis* that Browning alters Euripides, as in the comment that Balaustion makes upon the action. That is almost completely unhistorical: Browning forgets the strong role of Fate in Greek tragedy; he forgets that the play is a satyr-play; he forgets, too, that Admetus is a king, and that the relations between a Greek husband and wife were not those of England in the nineteenth century. The reformation of Admetus from weakness, cowardice, and selfishness to quiet strength and a readiness to accept death is probably almost entirely Browning's, though Euripides possibly intended some growth. As we shall see, Browning's chief interest is in the rosy, rough rescuer, Heracles, who comes, like Perseus to save Andromeda or Browning to rescue Miss Barrett, to bring back Alcestis from the grave. In all, we may say that along with a remarkable fidelity to Euripides' word, Browning creates a completely anachronistic set of values and emotions. He has rewritten the story in modern terms. The appended account by Balaustion of what might have been, in which all the characters are noble and all the events ultimately happy, is a piece of pure modern sentimentalism which Browning probably borrowed from William Morris's *The Love of Alcestis*.

The poem, *Aristophanes' Apology*, with transcript of the *Heracles*, need not concern us here so much. It is an erudite, garrulous piece of special pleading for Euripides against his mocker Aristophanes. The learning is prodigious though culled from a few books, as Professor Tisdal has shown.<sup>6</sup> The realism of the background is to be expected from Browning, as is the intense concern with character and motive. But the "Apology" of Aristophanes was never made in fact, and is hardly likely in imagination, for the comic poet did not see in Euripides those things which Browning saw—the great art, the lofty idealism, the sympathetic insight into the human heart. The poem is alive because of Browning's boundless energy; but the defenders of Aristophanes have

<sup>6</sup> Frederick M. Tisdal, "Browning's *Aristophanes' Apology*," in *University of Missouri Studies*, 1927, II, 1-46. See also De Vane, *A Browning Handbook*, pp. 334-9.

resented the portrait which makes him "the scapegoat of Athenian sins, while Euripides shines forth a saint as well as a sage."<sup>7</sup> Browning's idolatry of Euripides had reached its apex in the tenth book of *The Ring and the Book* where Pope Innocent, speaking pure Browningsese, makes Euripides a forerunner of Christ, like Isaiah. But though it is couched in more human terms, *Aristophanes' Apology* maintains the high level of admiration for Euripides.

Turning from Euripides, I wish now to illustrate another aspect of Browning's connection with Greek things—the effect of a Greek myth upon him in his poetry and his life. The myth is the story of Andromeda which in all seriousness became the symbol of Browning's faith, though most characteristically the myth seems not to have presented itself to Browning first in its Greek form, and its application is seldom Greek in detail or in spirit. At the beginning of his literary career in *Pauline* Browning addressed himself to the legend, or rather to Carravaggio's picture of Andromeda which Browning had upon his desk before him. We read in *Pauline*

Andromeda<sup>1</sup>

And she is with me years roll, I shall change,  
But change can touch her not—so beautiful  
With her fixed eyes, earnest and still, and hair  
Lifted and spread by the salt sweeping breeze,  
And one red beam, all the storm leaves in heaven,  
Resting upon her eyes and hair, such hair,  
As she awaits the snake on the wet beach  
By the dark rock and the white wave just breaking  
At her feet; quite naked and alone, a thing  
I doubt not, nor fear for, secure some god  
To save will come in thunder from the stars.<sup>2</sup>

The years rolled, but Browning did not change as much as he imagined he would. Two years before the end of his career, that is, in 1887, in the *Parleying with Francis Furini*, Browning once more employed the myth of Andromeda. Furini becomes the stalking horse for Browning's defense of nude paintings, and specifically a defense of his son, Pen Browning, whose colossal figures in the nude had been subjected to

<sup>1</sup> John Addington Symonds in his review of *Aristophanes' Apology* in the *Academy* for April 17, 1875.

<sup>2</sup> *Pauline*, II 656-67.



prudish contemporary criticism.<sup>9</sup> The emphasis here is upon the nakedness of Andromeda and the goodness of the flesh, but the setting is the same, the blackness, with the single beam of light, the sea and the wind. A little further in the poem the myth of Andromeda is applied differently; this time Andromeda represents Browning's own faith, standing precariously upon the rock of consciousness amidst the growing darkness of the sky and the waters waste and wild, and awaiting destruction from the monsters of new scientific thought, or rescue from heaven.

Early and late does Browning use the Andromeda myth to express his faith. But these brackets must by no means be thought to be empty. In one form or another, the Andromeda pattern may be traced all through the poet's life and works. In the 'Forties Count Gismond was the Perseus to rescue the maligned lady of the romance; the ancient Gipsy rescued the Duchess in *The Flight of the Duchess*; in *My Last Duchess* no god came to the rescue of outraged innocence. That was an exception, and the lady of *The Glove* fared better in spite of the established story to the contrary. But Browning had good reason to make the Perseus of that story attractive and young, for the poem was written under the eye of Miss Barrett. It was a short step from writing these things and thinking habitually in these terms, to performing them in actual life, so we are not surprised when in 1846 Browning plays the part of Perseus to Miss Barrett's Andromeda, with only the part of the dragon left over for the unfortunate and misunderstood Mr. Barrett. Such a stroke as that might well confirm a man's belief in his role for life. In Browning's Italian days the Perseus-Andromeda pattern finds a more subtle expression—all the obvious rescues have been accomplished—but after Mrs. Browning's death, the pattern becomes prominent again. This is especially true in *The Ring and the Book*, where Browning is striving to build his masterpiece on a huge scale, and to make it a masterpiece peculiarly his own. Here we see Pompilia—Mrs. Browning—Andromeda rescued from the dragon Guido by Caponsacchi—Browning—Perseus, first; and later when Truth or Justice is endangered, Pope Innocent, the Viceregent of God, is the rescuer.

But to point to these large patterns in *The Ring and the Book* is to give the barest indication of the manner in which the myth of Andromeda had penetrated and shaped the conscious thinking and the deeper unconscious feeling in the poet's greatest single achievement. I wish, with the reader's indulgence, to look for a few minutes at the prevalence, or rather the all-pervasiveness of the Andromeda myth through certain

<sup>9</sup> See De Vane, *Browning's Parleyings*, 1927, pp. 180-4, 210-2.

books of the poem. I must beg to include with the Andromeda myth its Christian cognate, the legend of St. George and the dragon. The connection of the two legends is not difficult to see: at Arsuf or Joppa—neither of them more than a few miles from Lydda where St. George performed his exploits—Perseus had slain the dragon that threatened the virgin Andromeda; and George, like many another Christian saint, entered into the inheritance of veneration previously enjoyed by the pagan hero. In those books of *The Ring and the Book* where the speakers give favorable judgments upon Pompilia and Caponsacchi, I have counted 22 references to the Andromeda and its cognate myth, not counting such facts as this—that Browning, for all his accuracy and care in fixing the condition of the moon on the night of Pompilia's flight, April 22-23, 1007, at the last moment changed the date, but not the month, so that the flight would fall on April 23, St. George's Day. By the light of cynical speakers in *The Ring and the Book*, the flight of Pompilia and Caponsacchi is usually referred to in the terms of the story of Helen and Paris, *De Raptu Helenae*; and Guido's pursuit is likened humorously to Vulcan pursuing Mars to get back his Venus. But it is not so much to say that whenever Browning is representing, favorably or unfavorably, Pompilia and Caponsacchi—and that is a great deal of the time—the great scene at the Inn at Castelnuovo where the real conflict between the opposing forces truly takes place, he habitually and consistently thinks of it in the terms of the Andromeda situation, with Caponsacchi as Perseus, Pompilia as the manacled victim, and Guido as the dragon. Moreover the scene is generally set as nearly as possible with the colors he imagined in the Andromeda scene. Caponsacchi thus pictures that moment at the Inn:

She started up, stood erect, face to face  
With the husband: back he fell, was buttressed there  
By the window all a flame with morning-red,  
He the black figure, the opprobrious blur  
Against all peace and joy and light and life.<sup>1</sup>

And Pompilia speaking of the same scene describes Guido as "The serpent towering and triumphant." When the pope thinks of Pompilia in the clutches of Guido, he uses a figure appropriate to Andromeda's plight:

Such denizens o' the cave now cluster round  
And heat the furnace sevenfold: time indeed

<sup>1</sup> *The Ring and the Book*, VI, 1523-7.

A bolt from heaven should cleave roof and clear place,  
 Transfix and show the world, suspiring flame,  
 The main offender, scar and brand the rest  
 Hurrying, each miscreant to his hole: then flood  
 And purify the scene with outside day—  
 Which yet, in the absolutest drench of dark,  
 Ne'er wants a witness, some stray beauty-beam  
 To the despair of hell.<sup>2</sup>

When Browning himself describes the same situation—Pompilia in the power of Guido and his family—he says,

These I saw,  
 In recrudescency of baffled hate,  
 Prepare to wring the uttermost revenge  
 From body and soul thus left them: all was sure,  
 Fire laid and cauldron set, the obscene ring traced,  
 The victim stripped and prostrate: what of God?  
 The cleaving of a cloud, a cry, a crash,  
 Quenched lay their cauldron, cowered i' the dust the crew,  
 As, in a glory of armour like Saint George,  
 Out again sprang the young good beauteous priest  
 Bearing away the lady in his arms . . .<sup>3</sup>

Indeed, so steadily is the Perseus-St. George legend used that we may know what to think of each speaker in the poem by the treatment he accords the myth, and by what version he employs. The speaker in *The Other Half-Rome*, favorable to Pompilia, gives the legend a Christian character, but he only faintly realizes his figure. When he has sketched the miraculous rescue of Pompilia by Caponsacchi, he turns upon his auditor:

How do you say? It were improbable;  
 So is the legend of my patron-saint.<sup>4</sup>

In Caponsacchi's monologue the scene of Andromeda's distress before the rescuer comes is set again and again—in the box at the theater with Guido lurking in the background, and in the window of her house, for example, and always in the same terms of darkness and light. Of course, Caponsacchi was only a partially effective Perseus or St. George, and

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, X, 994–1003.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 577–87.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 1050–1.

being modest, cannot refer to himself in such terms, except ironically, as he does here:

I rise in your esteem, sagacious Sirs,  
Stand up a renderer of reasons, not  
The officious priest would personate Saint George  
For a mock Princess in undragoned days.<sup>5</sup>

But there is nothing, or very little, to keep Pompilia in her monologue from speaking of Caponsacchi as Perseus or St. George, and she constantly refers to him as such. One of the legends in the tapestries in her house, she recalls, was that of "the slim young man with wings at head, and wings at feet, and sword threatening a monster." And, of course, though she cannot call herself Andromeda, she constantly recognizes herself in the role of the helpless and innocent victim, and Caponsacchi as the heaven-sent rescuer.

The characters of evil import in *The Ring and the Book* use the same essential myth, but use it in a debased form or for a base purpose. Thus Guido uses it when in his defense he gives an account of one of his ancestors who met death in the region where Perseus and St. George had performed their exploits:

One of us Franceschini fell long since  
I' the Holy Land, betrayed, tradition runs,  
To Paynims by the feigning of a girl  
He rushed to free from ravisher, and found  
Lay safe enough with friends in ambuscade  
Who flayed him while she clapped her hands and laughed.  
Let me end, falling by a like device.<sup>6</sup>

The keen intelligence of Guido sees the matter clearly, whatever he may make of it, but the dim mind of Bottinus, the lawyer, can only arrive at this approximation of the Andromeda myth in his defense of Pompilia's conduct in arranging for her flight:

Methinks I view some ancient bas-relief.  
There stands Hesione thrust out by Troy,  
Her father's hand has chained her to a crag,  
Her mother's from the virgin plucked the vest,  
At a safe distance both distressful watch,  
While near and nearer comes the snorting orc.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, VI, 1769-72

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, V, 1419-25



gain to itself the humanistic, earthly ambitions of the Renaissance, and, it has been said, the generous spirit in which Michael Angelo painted the roof of the Sistine Chapel and Raphael the *Cameia della Segnatura* had made "not only Judaism, but also Graeco Roman Paganism . . . an antechamber to Christianity; and this antique culture gave not merely a negative, but also a positive preparation for Christ. . . ." <sup>8</sup> In England, Spenser was able to make a temporary peace, after his fashion, between Puritan Christianity and Classical lore; and under the generous and universal conceptions of the Renaissance, so was young John Milton. But Puritanism was less accommodating, and as Gardiner truly says. "The highest aim of Puritan literature was the exaltation of the strong at the expense of the weak—of the pre-eminently good at the expense of the more moderately virtuous. It was not Milton's personal misogyny resulting in the substitution of Lve or Dalila for Juliet or Rosalind, it was the habit of looking for more than was to be achieved by human nature, till the search for ideal beauty and goodness led to contemptuous blindness to the beauty and goodness inherent in our mingled nature " <sup>9</sup> It is a long story, and one that I may simplify beyond recognition but, given the Puritanical conception, repudiation of Greece, however dearly loved, seems to be inevitable. It should not surprise us unduly, except in its fierce statement, that Milton in the *Paradise Regained* should arraign and condemn, through the voice of Christ, the philosophers and poets of Greece from whose works he had drunk so deep in his youth, whose art to the end was the shaping influence in his own art

"Alas! what can they teach, and not mislead,  
Ignorant of themselves, of God much more,  
And how the World began, and how Man fell,  
Degraded by himself, on grace depending?" <sup>1</sup>

Once again, beginning in the late eighteenth century, and extending far into the nineteenth, the conflict was renewed. In England, the Evangelical movement and the Greek Revival (like the Reformation and the Renaissance in the sixteenth century before them) rose almost simultaneously, and were destined to war. "What has Christ to do with Apollo?" As early as 1805 John Foster, a sincere and not unusually narrow Evangelical Christian, broached the problem afresh in his Essay

<sup>8</sup> *The Cambridge Modern History*, II, *The Reformation*, F X Kraus, p 6

<sup>9</sup> *Chambers's Encyclopaedia of English Literature*, 1901, I, 546. Quoted from Grierson, *Cross Currents in English Literature of the XVIIth Century*, London, 1929, p 275.

<sup>1</sup> *Paradise Regained*, IV, 309-12

*On the Aversion of Men of Taste to Evangelical Religion* <sup>2</sup> In a deeply troubled spirit he observed that "what is denominated Polite Literature, the grand school in which taste acquires its laws and refined perceptions, and in which are formed, much more than under any higher austerer discipline, the moral sentiments, is, for the far greater part, hostile to the religion of Christ; partly by introducing insensibly a certain order of opinions unconsonant, or at least not identical, with the principles of that religion; and still more, by training the feelings to a habit alien from its spirit." Foster says clearly that Christianity and the spirit of Polite Literature, ancient and modern, are divided, as by a gulf, because of a radical difference in their estimate of human nature. "Christianity, taken in this view [that is, the Evangelical, Calvinist, Augustinian], contains a humiliating estimate of the moral condition of man, as a being radically corrupt—the doctrine of redemption from that condition by the merit and sufferings of Christ—the doctrine of a divine influence being necessary to transform the character of the human mind in order to prepare it for a higher station in the universe—and a grand moral peculiarity by which it insists on humility, penitence, and a separation from the spirit and habits of the world." Now that is the Evangelical position, and it is not greatly different from the views held by such diverse Victorians as F D Maurice and John Henry Newman. The reader will remember Newman in the *Idea of a University* saying: "Man's work will savour of man; in his elements and powers excellent and admirable, but prone to disorder and excess, to error and to sin. Such too will be his literature; it will have the beauty and the fierceness, the sweetness and the rankness, of the natural man, and, with all its richness and greatness, will necessarily offend the sense of those who, in the Apostle's words, are really 'exercised to discern between good and evil.'" <sup>3</sup>

I have given this background of religious objection to the spirit of literature—and pagan Greek literature was especially vulnerable as the father of evils—because it plays a part in Browning's rejection of Greece; for he too was an ardent Evangelical. But the conflict did not rise into Browning's consciousness until he met that even more ardent chapel-worshiper, Elizabeth Barrett She, like Browning, had been in her youth a keen student of Greek things, but she began early to concentrate upon the Greek Christian writers. Greek literature for her became primarily a vestibule to Christianity, and she suffered the pagan

<sup>2</sup> Published in *Essays in a Series of Letters*, 1827 I quote from Gnerison, as above, pp 1-2, 29

<sup>3</sup> Newman, *The Idea of a University*, 1927, *English Catholic Literature*, Sec 4

Greeks, from Homer on, because they had sought the divine, though darkly. To her, Prometheus was a forerunner of Christ, and Caucasus of Calvary; and she believed that in the law of progress the theme of revenge and hate must give way to the theme of love. In this spirit she translated the *Prometheus*, and planned a drama with Horne, the *Psyche Apocalypse*, which was to end in a vision of the Cross, and wrote *A Drama of Exile*, and in this spirit she and Browning projected a new Prometheus early in 1845.<sup>4</sup> Her general mood was the pious one of exultation that "Pan, Pan is dead." She did, indeed, late in her life write her poem, *A Musical Instrument*—"What is he doing, the great God Pan"—a poem which posterity often thinks her best. But there, as Mrs. Browning would say, Christ includes Pan.

Mrs. Browning brought a new element into the conflict between Evangelicalism and Hellenism which I have not yet mentioned, but which was to influence Browning decisively. This was the nineteenth-century version of the doctrine of progress. The idea of progress has a history of its own, but is told only in outline by Bury.<sup>5</sup> In the nineteenth century the doctrine of progress became for a while the strong ally of Evangelicalism, and it is not too much to say that by the time these ideas reach Browning they have become essential parts of a single, strongly held faith. And, as we shall see in a moment, both halves of this faith warred against a Hellenism that he had long loved. It was as an advocate of progress, rather than as one on principle opposed to the antique, that Miss Barrett wrote to Browning early in their acquaintance: "I am inclined to think that we want new *forms*, as well as thoughts. The old gods are dethroned. Why should we go back to the antique moulds, classical moulds, as they are so improperly called? If it is a necessity of Art to do so, why then those critics are right who hold that Art is exhausted and the world too worn out for poetry. I do not, for my part, believe this. and I believe the so-called necessity of Art to be the mere feebleness of the artist. Let us all aspire rather to *Life*, and let the dead bury their dead. . . . And then Christianity is a worthy *myth*, and poetically acceptable."<sup>6</sup>

The doctrine of progress was uppermost in the mind of the young Browning of the late 'Thirties and 'Forties, and he had drifted away, in his concern with worldly success and the theater, from the Evangelical fold of his youth. Miss Barrett stopped all that in no time, and the first

<sup>4</sup> *Letters of Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, 1899, I, 45-6

<sup>5</sup> J. B. Bury, *The Idea of Progress*, 1920

<sup>6</sup> *Letters of Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, I, 45-6





that Christian art was superior in its insight and its ambitions, if not in its technique, to Greek art:

Growth came when, looking your last on them all,  
 You turned your eyes inwardly one fine day  
 And cried with a start—What if we so small  
 Be greater and grander the while than they?  
 Are they perfect of lineament, perfect of stature?  
 In both of such lower types are we  
 Precisely because of our wider nature,  
 For time, theirs—ours, for eternity

The universal figures of the Renaissance were of great comfort to Browning, as they were not, in their immortality, to his master, John Ruskin. But to go on for a moment,

On which I conclude, that the early painters  
 To cries of "Greek Art and what more wish you?"  
 Replied, "To become now self acquainters,  
 And paint man, man, whatever the issue!  
 Make new hopes shine through the flesh they fray,  
 New fears aggrandize the rags and tatters.  
 To bring the invisible full into play!  
 Let the visible go to the dogs—what matters?"

Well, in the province of art, progress is saved, temporarily and desperately, by our Christian hope and our superior psychological insight. But there was still Greek literature to deal with.

We have seen already how Browning treated Euripides as a precursor of Christianity in *The Ring and the Book* and how in *Balaustion's Adventure* and *Aristophanes' Apology* he had attempted to establish Euripides as the most modern of Greek poets in his sympathies and his intuitions. But the rising tide of interest and admiration for Hellenism in the 'Sixties and 'Seventies, mainly sponsored by Matthew Arnold, was not pleasing to Browning. He and Mrs. Browning had disagreed with Arnold's famous preface of 1853, and he objected further to Arnold's (and the world's) judgment that Aeschylus and Sophocles were greater than Euripides. And more, he would not allow the claims that were made (chiefly by Arnold) to the effect that the Greeks were models of literary form. Mrs. Orr, the biographer of the poet who knew him personally, has an illuminating word to say upon this point: "Mr. Browning's deep feeling for the humanities of Greek literature, and

his almost passionate love for the language, contrasted strongly with his refusal to regard even the first of Greek writers as models of literary style. The pretensions raised for them on this ground were inconceivable to him; and his translation of the *Agamemnon*, published in 1877, was partly made, I am convinced, for the pleasure of exposing these claims, and of rebuking them. His preface to the transcript gives evidence of this. The glee with which he pointed to it when it first appeared was no less significant."<sup>8</sup> It seems evident that Browning translated the *Agamemnon*, one of the greatest of Greek plays, in a painful, literal, naked manner in order to confound Matthew Arnold and the Hellenists. The preface which Browning attached to the translation bears this out: "Fortunately the poorest translation, provided only it be faithful, —though it reproduce all the artistic confusion of tenses, moods, and persons, with which the original teems,—will not only suffice to display what an eloquent friend [Matthew Arnold] maintains to be the all-in-all of poetry—'the action of the piece'—but may help to illustrate his assurance that 'the Greeks are the highest models of expression, the unapproached masters of the grand style: their expression is so excellent because it is so admirably kept in its right degree of prominence, because it is so simple and so well subordinated, because it draws its force directly from the pregnancy of the matter which it conveys . . . not a word wasted, not a sentiment capriciously thrown in, stroke on stroke!' So may all happen!" The *Agamemnon*, it has been remarked, is a somewhat ponderous mode of argument.

But Browning's full and formal repudiation of Greece in favor of the higher ideals, as he thought, of Christianity and progress came in his *Parleying with Gerard de Lairese* in 1887. In that poem, the best of that difficult testament of his late beliefs, Browning wishes to pay his debt of gratitude to Lairese, the pseudo-classical painter and writer who had filled Browning's youthful mind with classical images of gods and goddesses, satyrs, fauns, and nymphs. But even more, he wished to show again the superiority of the modern world and its conceptions—its progress in morality, in insight, in religion. The Greeks, he says, saw the body; we see the soul. To show this superiority, Browning attempts to give us a series of pictures—purple descriptions of Greek things—to beat Lairese at his own game—but in each case he points out the limitations of the Greek ideals. Thus, with great vigor and effectiveness Browning shows us Prometheus chained to his rock, the victim of a barbarous deity; Artemis at early morning, beautiful, but

<sup>8</sup> Mrs. Sutherland Orr, *Life and Letters of Robert Browning* (revised ed. 1908), p. 294.

a cold and cruel goddess, the bane of the marriage bed; Lyda, the disdainful nymph, at noon, with the satyr yearning hopelessly for her; Darius and Alexander, face to face in the evening, striving for the mastery of the world. And finally he brings before us the thin pale ghost of Greek civilization and Greek religion:

What was the best Greece babbled of as truth?  
 "A shade, a wretched nothing,—sad, thin, drear,  
 Cold, dark, it holds on to the lost loves here,  
 If hand have haply sprinkled o'er the dead  
 Three charitable dust-heaps, made mouth red  
 One moment by the sip of sacrifice:  
 Just so much comfort thaws the stubborn ice  
 Slow-thickening upward till it choke at length  
 The last faint flutter craving—not for strength,  
 Not beauty, not the riches and the rule  
 O'er men that made life life indeed." Sad school  
 Was Hades! Gladly,—might the dead but sink  
 To life back,—to the dregs once more would drink  
 Each interloper, drain the humblest cup  
 Fate mixes for humanity.<sup>9</sup>

In this way Browning assaulted Greek moral conceptions, Greek psychological insight, and Greek hopelessness in religion. But so splendid are his pictures that it is evident that Browning, all unintentionally, vindicated what he set out to expose; and ten years after reading the *Parleyings* one will certainly have forgotten Browning's argument, but one may remember his picture of Prometheus, of Artemis, Darius and Alexander, and we cannot agree with him when he says,

The dead Greek lore lies buried in the urn  
 Where who seeks fire finds ashes.<sup>1</sup>

His final word is that poets must no longer

"Dream afresh old godlike shapes,  
 Recapture ancient fable that escapes,  
 Push back reality, repeople earth  
 With vanished falseness, recognize no worth  
 In fact new-born unless 'us rendered back  
 Pallid by fancy, as the western rack  
 Of fading land bequeaths the lake some gleam  
 Of its gone glory."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>9</sup> *Parleyings* . . . with *Gerard de Lairese*, ll. 394-408.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 392-3.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 381-9.

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When Browning repudiated the Greece he loved, as Milton had done before him, he was within his rights. But he could not thereby eradicate the imagery, the whole poems dictated by the influence of the Greeks, or the poems instigated by the very necessity of his challenging the validity of the Greek influence. That so un-Hellenic a poet could have written so much under the stimulus of Hellenism is in itself a proof of the strong spirit of Greece in the nineteenth century.

# Aesthetics in English Social Reform: Ruskin and His Followers

By FRANK DANIEL CURTIN

## I

FACILE ascriptions of indebtedness are, it is obvious, too often based upon loose parallels of thought or phrase. Yet even though one recognizes "the social mind," the currents of thought in a society, one must notice also that those currents are clarified by leading thinkers and writers. Such men, by their definite statement of ideas and their vivid transference of attitudes, give stimulus and outline to the thoughts of others. Carlyle gave both to a generation of Victorian idealists—to Dickens, to Kingsley, to Disraeli, to a group numerous and notable, with Ruskin prominent among them. The conclusions of John Stuart Mill found place in various fields of thought: political, economic, literary. The attitudes and ideas of John Ruskin, so often dismissed as sentimental and unpractical in his own time and after, were seminal in the social criticism of the late nineteenth century.

How widespread and profound Ruskin's stimulus was, has been suggested from time to time. One well-known detail is worth repeating:

When the Parliament of 1906 was elected, there was a great hubbub about the large contingent of Labour Members, and an ingenious journalist sent circulars to them asking them to state, What were the Books that had Influenced them? Some said one, and some another; but the book which appeared in the greatest number of lists was Ruskin's *Unto This Last*.<sup>1</sup>

Under the auspices of the Ruskin Society in London the centenary of Ruskin's birth (1919) was celebrated by a series of lectures, and these and other tributes were collected and published by John Howard

<sup>1</sup> E. T. Cook, *The Life of Ruskin* (London, 1912), ii, 14.

Whitehouse;<sup>2</sup> again in 1934 such a collection was made.<sup>3</sup> The notable variety of interests represented by the men whose opinions are displayed illustrates the breadth of Ruskin's appeal; among those men were Viscount Bryce, John Masefield, Eric Gill, Sir William Rothenstein, Laurence Binyon, Dean Inge, and John A. Hobson. The distinction of these men gives weight to their comments. One dramatic anecdote in the most recent collection is vouched for by the Bishop of Birmingham, Dr. E. W. Barnes:

Some thirty years ago there was in South Africa a young Indian barrister doing well, rather remarkably well, in his profession. He was about to take a somewhat long railway journey, and a friend gave him *Unto This Last*. The friend saw him a fortnight later. That young barrister said, "the book was an inspiration. Nay, more, it was a gospel for life." He had ceased his practice at the Bar. He was going to be a follower of John Ruskin. You know his name, of course. They call him Mahatma Gandhi.<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps in such stimulus—to thinkers, executives, poets, and workmen—lies the chief debt of his contemporaries, and of his successors, to Ruskin as social critic. The source of it lies in many of his attributes: in the personal charm which drew Oxford students about him and helped to set them digging on the Hinksey Road, Arnold Toynbee among them; in his voice, that *vox angelica* which Oliver Elton remembered, which Sir Raymond Unwin speaks of as the "musical voice" which first turned him to social reform; but pre-eminently in his literary style—in his ability to build up images of idyllic past and tawdry present at Carshalton Springs, to satirize classical economics by comparing it with "a science of gymnastics which assumed that men had no skeletons,"<sup>5</sup> to elicit pity for the lot of the poor and excite indignation toward the society which connived at such poverty. These qualities of Ruskin and these talents gained attention for him and stirred his audience.

Yet the concern here is not with them, nor with the breadth of Rus-

<sup>2</sup> John Howard Whitehouse (ed.), *John Ruskin: Letters written on the occasion of the Centenary of his Birth* (London, 1919), *Ruskin Centenary Addresses* (London, 1919), *Ruskin the Prophet and Other Centenary Studies* (New York, 1920). See also G. B. Shaw, *Ruskin's Politics* (London, 1921).

<sup>3</sup> John Howard Whitehouse (ed.), *To the Memory of Ruskin* (Cambridge, 1934).

<sup>4</sup> *To the Memory of Ruskin*. Patrick Geddes attests to Gandhi's use of "Ruskin's criticism of the machine industry and its money economics." "Our City of Thought," *Survey*, liv (August 1, 1925), 489.

<sup>5</sup> John Ruskin, *Unto This Last*, in *Works*, ed. Cook and Wedderburn, Library Edition, 39 vols. (London, 1903-1912), xvii, 26. All future references to the works of Ruskin will be to this edition. Each volume will be identified in the edition by a number in parenthesis after the title.

kin's stimulus; it is rather with the acceptance of certain of Ruskin's ideas. A single feature of Ruskin's thought can serve to illustrate that Ruskin was more than a stimulus in subsequent English social criticism, that he was the source of recurrent themes basic to the writings of later social critics, themselves by no means inconsiderable. Important among such themes are those resulting from Ruskin's application of aesthetics to social criticism and reform.

## II

WHEN, about the middle of his writing career, shortly before 1860, Ruskin turned from art to social criticism, he was merely shifting his chief attention to the other of two fields which he had more and more frequently declared to be interrelated. And as in art criticism Ruskin had increasingly attempted to display the influence of society upon art; so in social criticism he continually asserted the importance of art and, more generally, of beauty and of the creative impulse in human life, proclaiming the need for both of these latter in Victorian society. This application of aesthetic judgments to contemporary social conditions, especially those of environment and work, is a distinctive contribution of Ruskin to English social criticism.<sup>6</sup>

Ruskin considered art the expression not of some special aesthetic faculty but of the whole personality of the artist—his wisdom, his sincerity, his love of beauty, his refinement, his imagination.<sup>7</sup> Great art,

<sup>6</sup> H. A. Needham in *Le développement de l'esthétique sociologique en France et en Angleterre au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, 1926), p. 2, defines three parts of aesthetics, metaphysical, psychological, and sociological: "Nous pouvons donc distinguer trois parties de l'esthétique, parties qui ont leurs relations l'une avec l'autre, mais qui ont leurs propres sphères: la première, abstraite ou métaphysique, qui cherche une définition du Beau; la deuxième, psychologique, qui constate l'effet de la beauté sur l'âme humaine, et de cette étude tire certains déductions relatives à la 'forme' dans l'art; la troisième, sociologique, qui cherche à déterminer la place de la beauté dans la vie et son rôle dans les activités humaines." By the standards of his own sociological aesthetics Ruskin judged the industrial society in which he lived, attacking especially the ugliness of environment and the uncreative nature of work.

<sup>7</sup> Among the many interpretations of Ruskin's aesthetics none stands alone, definitive. Henry Ladd's *The Victorian Morality of Art* illustrates the well-nigh insuperable complexities of only one phase of the subject, the shifting metaphysical foundations of Ruskin's art criticism. Wilenski makes a different approach, the biographical, to what he calls "an appalling muddle." (*John Ruskin, an Introduction to Further Study of His Life and Work* [New York, 1933], p. 192.) Wilenski nevertheless finds Ruskin "a great man and a genius," p. 28. It is to H. A. Needham that one must go for a full analysis of Ruskin's sociological aesthetics. Each critic—these three, and Collingwood, Cook, de la Sizeranne, Roe—reads Ruskin with a special interest and writes with a special emphasis. In the summary which follows, those ideas are stressed which Ruskin draws from in his social criticism.



Ruskin says, "is literally great. It compasses and calls forth the entire human spirit, whereas any other kind of art, being more or less small or narrow, compasses and calls forth only *part* of the human spirit."<sup>8</sup> An expression of the full character of the artist, it is not indulged in for art's sake, for pride in skill alone, in self-expression alone. It is "the expression of man's delight in God's work." It is the artist's interpretation, his realization of the world "Wherever art is practised for its own sake, and the delight of the workman is in what he *does* and *produces*, instead of in what he *interprets* or *exhibits*—there art has an influence of the most fatal kind on brain and heart, and it issues, if long so pursued, in the *destruction both of intellectual power and moral principle*, whereas art, devoted humbly and self forgetfully to the clear statement and record of the facts of the universe, is always helpful and beneficent to mankind, full of comfort, strength, and salvation."<sup>9</sup> "To mankind," including the artist himself the artist in fulfilling his proper function as recorder and interpreter of the world about him for all men brings completion to himself. Thus, Ruskin declares, ". . . you cannot so much as once look at the ruffings of the plumes of a pelican pluming itself after it has been in the water, or carefully draw the contours of the wing either of a vulture or a common swift, or paint the rose and vermillion on that of a flamingo, without receiving almost a new conception of the meaning of form and colour in creation. . . ." <sup>1</sup> The artist gains by losing himself—he achieves understanding only when he comes down from the ivory tower, and only then he finds happiness. His life becomes "the life of the crowned spirit, moving as a light in creation—happy in what it has securely done—happier in what, day by day, it may as securely hope, happiest at the close of life, when the right hand begins to forget its cunning, to remember, that there was never a touch of the chisel or the pencil it wielded, but has added to the knowledge and quickened the happiness of mankind."<sup>2</sup> Art, to summarize, is not an escape from life but a means toward it. Henry Ladd stresses this aspect of Ruskin's theories

Ruskin's is the first theory that I know of to suggest that in the activity of art itself there lay the ultimate social value, the means to the end of good living. He did not merely relate art more closely to living than former theorists, but suggested that art was itself a good life.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>8</sup> *Modern Painters*, III (v), 66

<sup>9</sup> *Two Paths* (xvi), pp. 290, 268

<sup>1</sup> *Lectures on Art* (xx), p. 105

- *Two Paths* (xvi), p. 292

<sup>3</sup> Henry Ladd, *The Victorian Morality of Art* (New York, 1932), p. 337

Nor is this artistic satisfaction reserved to a small group; it is open to the artisan as well as to the artist. Ruskin draws the crafts and the arts together. Decorative art, for instance, is not a degraded or separate kind; all art may be decorative, and the greatest art yet produced has been.<sup>4</sup> "In a truly civilized and disciplined state," the crafts would all be fine arts, and the artists would be, as they were in medieval Italy, apprenticed to craftsmen.<sup>5</sup> And Ruskin would widen the term *craftsman* to include most workmen. As the true artist is only a superior workman, "a beautiful development of tailor or carpenter,"<sup>6</sup> so the workman can in most undertakings find the joy of the artist in his work. It is this idea of Ruskin's which finds full expression in "The Nature of Gothic" in the second volume of *The Stones of Venice*. There Ruskin differentiates three types of architectural ornament: servile (for example Greek or Egyptian), "in which the execution or power of the inferior workman is entirely subjected to the intellect of the higher"; constitutional (medieval), where, though he is under the authority of his superior, the workman can display his own creative skill; and revolutionary (illustrated by the Renaissance), "in which no executive authority is admitted."<sup>7</sup> The condition of the workman in the first type is slavery; he is a tool, not a man. Here is the basis of Ruskin's attack on machines and mechanical labor:

Men were not intended to work with the accuracy of tools, to be precise and perfect in all their actions. If you will have that precision out of them, and make their fingers measure degrees like cog-wheels, and their arms strike curves like compasses, you must unhumanize them.<sup>8</sup>

From such degradation men rebel, as they will from the slavery which in England the demand for finish imposes upon them.

As a creative act, art is a means to life for the individual artist, the individual workman; as a product it is a source of joy and moral effect to society. "Depend upon it," Ruskin declares, "whatever value [creative work] may possess, by reason of the painter's skill, its chief and final value, to any nation, depends upon its being able to exalt and refine, as well as to please."<sup>9</sup> For art is the vehicle of beauty and of truth. Impressions of beauty are, for Ruskin, not sensual, not intellec-

<sup>4</sup> *Two Paths* (xvi), p. 320.

<sup>5</sup> *Time and Tide* (xvii), p. 426.

<sup>6</sup> *Fors Clavigera*, I (xxvii), 186.

<sup>7</sup> *Stones of Venice*, II (x), 188 f.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 192.

<sup>9</sup> *Joy for Ever* (xvi), p. 35.

tual, but moral; beauty elevates and ennobles living.<sup>1</sup> Love of beauty, "an essential part of all healthy human nature . . . is itself wholly good."<sup>2</sup> And Ruskin remarks: "As the art of life is learned, it will be found at last that all lovely things are also necessary . . . because man does not live by bread only, but also by the desert manna, by every wondrous word and unknowable work of God."<sup>3</sup> The artist transfers his "delight in God's work"—and his knowledge of it also. One characteristic of all great art, Ruskin asserts, "is the earnest and intense seizing of natural facts."<sup>4</sup> The highest fine arts endeavor "to relate to us the utmost ascertainable truth respecting visible things and moral feelings." The artist therefore in such transference performs a social service:

All the great arts have for their object either the support or exaltation of human life,—usually both. . . . You must have the right moral state first, or you cannot have the art. But when the art is once obtained, its reflected action enhances and completes the moral state out of which it arose, and, above all, communicates the exultation to other minds which are already morally capable of the like.<sup>5</sup>

This social function of art is democratic, not reserved for an élite. As the workman should be able to express himself in his craft, so there should be a "close and healthy relation of the fine arts with material use." The objects of high art are twofold, "*to state a true thing*, or to *adorn a serviceable one*," its offices being to give "precision and charm to truth; . . . precision and charm to service." Indeed the main function of art is to give "brightness to life," by making delightful the houses men live in and the articles they use at home and work. Moreover, "from highest to lowest, health of art has first depended on reference to industrial use," and there is clear progression from simple cups to Cellini's vases, from cottage roofs to palaces.<sup>6</sup> Nor should great art be a luxury, for the rich only. Always needs must come before splendor. No nation has the right to permit luxury before all its poor are taken care of.

The effect of art upon society is a recurrent theme in Ruskin's writings; still more prominent is his illustration of the effect of society

<sup>1</sup> *Modern Painters*, ii (iv), 42; 46 f.

<sup>2</sup> *Lectures on Art* (xx), p. 90.

<sup>3</sup> *Unto This Last* (xvii), p. 111.

<sup>4</sup> *Two Paths* (xvi), p. 287.

<sup>5</sup> *Lectures on Art* (xx), pp. 24, 25, 46.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 95, 96, 107, 108.

upon art. It is this idea which lies behind *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, *The Stones of Venice*, and probably it was Ruskin's awareness of this which, more than any other feature of his art theory, led him into social criticism. He had found in Venice a lesson for England; he found in the art of Victorian England the weaknesses which characterized Venetian art in its decline. Particularly in architecture was the state of national life and character expressed, for good architecture is produced only by "prevalent and eager" national taste, or desire for beauty. Art expresses the nation, its virtues, its vices: ". . . a nation cannot be affected by any vice, or weakness, without expressing it, legibly, and for ever, either in bad art, or by want of art; and . . . there is no national virtue, small or great, which is not manifestly expressed in all the art which circumstances enable the people possessing that virtue to produce"<sup>7</sup> Victorian life is illustrated by the iron railings before public houses, by the cast-iron ornaments on railroad bridges, by the statue at Kensington labelled "English Present Century. No I," a statue in black and white marble of a Newfoundland dog trampling a serpent, "the most perfectly and roundly ill done thing which, as yet, in my whole life, I ever saw produced by art"<sup>8</sup>

From aesthetic theories such as these, the transition to social criticism, a transition best represented by *The Political Economy of Art* (1857; later republished as *A Joy for Ever*), was a gradual and almost inevitable one

### III

THE degradation of contemporary art Ruskin continues to deplore in his later writings, adding the warning "Continue to make that forbidden deity [Mammon] your principal one, and soon no more art, no more science, no more pleasure will be possible."<sup>9</sup> But Ruskin applies aesthetic judgments more widely, to contemporary life, repeatedly declaring the need for beauty in the countryside and the cities, and in other products besides the decorative arts; in the loss of such beauty, and even of concern for it, he discovers one cause of general unhappiness. He extends his criticism. It is not the element of beauty alone which is neglected in production; quantity of products is considered, quality ignored. And as he attacks machinery and pleads for craftsman-

<sup>7</sup> *Crown of Wild Olive* (xviii), pp. 434, 437

<sup>8</sup> *Fors Clavigera*, I (xxvii), 81

<sup>9</sup> *Crown of Wild Olive* (xviii), p. 458

ship instead of mechanized industry, he amplifies those views upon work which he has found to be corollaries of his doctrine of art and has announced in *The Stones of Venice*.

Throughout Ruskin's criticism runs the theme "There is no Wealth but Life." He points to the loss of vital wealth, material and spiritual, in Victorian England. He repeatedly calls attention to the ugliness of contemporary England—the destruction of the countryside and the growth of the sprawling cities, of London, "a ghastly heap of fermenting brickwork."<sup>1</sup> England has vitiated the air, and polluted the water. Every river in England has been turned into "a common sewer, so that you cannot so much as baptize an English baby but with filth, unless you hold its face out in the rain; and *even that* falls dirty."<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, Ruskin finds that what he calls the essential spiritual qualities of life—Admiration, Hope and Love—are all of them wanting or distorted. He does not mean these terms to be taken lightly. "For Admiration, you have learned contempt and conceit. There is no lovely thing ever done by man that you care for, or can understand. . . ." Country and city are alike blighted. The suburbs of London: "What a pestilence of [ugly houses], and unseemly plague of builders' work—as if the bricks of Egypt had multiplied like its lice, and alighted like its locusts—has fallen on the suburbs of loathsome London?"<sup>3</sup> And the results of living in such surroundings:

It is not possible to have any right morality, happiness, or art, in any country where the cities are thus built, or thus, let me rather say, clotted and coagulated; spots of a dreadful mildew, spreading by patches and blotches over the country they consume. You must have lovely cities, crystallised, not coagulated, into form, limited in size, and not casting out the scum and scurf of them into an encircling eruption of shame, but girded each with its sacred pomocrium, and with garlands of gardens full of blossoming trees, and softly guided streams.<sup>4</sup>

The lovely cities are a dream. Industrialism spreads its blight throughout England, destroying everywhere the sources of human happiness—not least, to Ruskin's mind, the beauty which man's spirit requires. Ruskin adds to the indictment. The worker, living in an increasingly joyless environment, can no longer find pleasure in his work. Mechanized industry has replaced the crafts. Ruskin examines the ef-

<sup>1</sup> *Crown of Wild Olive* (xviii), p. 406.

<sup>2</sup> *Fors Clavigera*, i (xxvii), 92 ff.

<sup>3</sup> *Fors*, iii (xxvii), 528.

<sup>4</sup> *Lectures on Art* (xx), p. 113.

fect of such work upon the workmen. In *The Stones of Venice* he had remarked:

It is verily this degradation of the operative into a machine, which, more than any other evil of the times, is leading the mass of nations everywhere into vain, incoherent, destructive struggling for a freedom of which they cannot explain the nature to themselves . . . It is not that men are ill fed, but that they have no pleasure in the work by which they make their bread, and therefore look to wealth as the only means of pleasure.<sup>5</sup>

Division of labor, Ruskin had said, is division of men.

It is not, truly speaking, the labour that is divided; but the men—Divided into mere segments of men—broken into small fragments and crumbs of life; so that all the little piece of intelligence that is left in a man is not enough to make a pin, or a nail, but exhausts itself in making the point of a pin, or the head of a nail.<sup>6</sup>

Manual labor is not degrading if it is governed by intellect; and head and hand are not to be separated. The workman must be allowed the satisfaction of creation, for just as "life without industry is guilt," so "industry without art is brutality."<sup>7</sup>

A distinction in terms is needed. "Mechanical work" is uncreative, and permits no freedom to the workman, it may or may not utilize machinery, though use of machinery requires such work. It is not true that Ruskin finds no value in machinery. He recognizes in it the "power of shortening labor, or otherwise accomplishing what human strength unaided could not" (in digging channels; in irrigation).<sup>8</sup> And Ruskin permits the use of wind machinery and waterwheels when he establishes Saint George's Guild. But steam machinery has destroyed the countryside and polluted the air of "the horrible nests" called towns;<sup>9</sup> and it has added to the degradation of workmen. Such observations lead Ruskin into extravagant recommendations. Manufactories should be reduced to the lowest limit, "so that nothing may ever be made of iron that can as effectually be made of wood or stone; and nothing moved by steam that can be as effectually moved by natural forces."<sup>1</sup> Statements like these often support the charge of medievalism

<sup>5</sup> *Stones of Venice*, II (x), 194.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 196.

<sup>7</sup> *Lectures on Art* (xx), p. 93.

<sup>8</sup> *Munera Pulveris* (xvii), p. 156.

<sup>9</sup> *Fors*, I (xxvii), 91.

<sup>1</sup> *Lectures on Art* (xx), p. 113.

made against Ruskin;<sup>2</sup> they nevertheless dramatize the hazards to human welfare in the use of machinery. (Patrick Geddes, repeating Ruskin's indictment, offers a less quixotic solution.)<sup>3</sup> The whole analysis of work<sup>4</sup> which Ruskin makes leads him to consider the vital costs of production when he theorizes upon economics—thus providing the basis for an important part of the economic ideas of J. A. Hobson.

Ruskin applies his standard of vital value to work; he applies it to products also. In the preface to *Munera Pulveris* he asserts that a knowledge of the fine arts is essential to economic theorists:

The following pages contain, I believe, the first accurate analysis of the laws of Political Economy which has been published in England. Many treatises, within their scope, correct, have appeared in contradiction of the views popularly received; but no exhaustive examination of the subject was possible to any person unacquainted with the value of the products of the highest industries, commonly called the "Fine Arts"; and no one acquainted with the nature of those industries has, so far as I know, attempted, or even approached the task.<sup>5</sup>

Ruskin's interest in aesthetics carries him toward a definition of "intrinsic" as opposed to exchange value. For illustration he chooses Parisian lithographs of the cancan and the paintings of Tintoretto, to comment caustically: "The city of Paris naturally supposed itself, and on all hitherto believed or stated principles of political economy, was, infinitely richer in the possession of a large number of these lithographic stones (not to speak of countless oil pictures and marble carvings of similar character), than Venice in the possession of those rags of mildewed canvas, flaunting in the south wind and its salt rain."<sup>6</sup> Production needs to be judged not by quantity or profits only but by quality, by intrinsic value. "To be 'valuable,' . . . is to 'avail towards life.' A truly valuable or availing thing is that which leads to life with its whole strength. . . . The value of a thing, therefore, is independent of opinion, and of quantity."<sup>7</sup> In ignoring such a basic definition, political economy is "a bastard science." Upon the basis of vital value,

<sup>2</sup> See Dean Inge on the impracticality of such suggestions, in an essay generally laudatory, "Ruskin and Plato," *Ruskin the Prophet*, ed. Whitehouse, pp. 25 ff.

<sup>3</sup> See below, p. 234.

<sup>4</sup> See also "Work," *Crown of Wild Olive* (xviii), pp. 401 ff.

<sup>5</sup> *Munera Pulveris* (xvii), p. 131. The passage displays the overstatement which so often in Ruskin obscures a brilliant insight or a cogent conclusion; see below, p. 215.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133.

<sup>7</sup> *Unto This Last* (xvii), p. 84 f. Ruskin defines "effectual" value also, value in use, *Munera Pulveris* (xvii), p. 154.

Ruskin defines prosperity: ". . . the prosperity of any nation is in exact proportion to the quantity of labor which it spends in obtaining and employing means of life." Consumption must be the end of production, —not profits, "for as consumption is the end and aim of production, so life is the end and aim of consumption."<sup>8</sup>

In *The Crown of Wild Olive*, in *Time and Tide*, and in *Fors Clavigera* Ruskin uses his definitions of "wealth," "intrinsic value," and "prosperity" to test contemporary England. His judgment is damning.

Our cities are a wilderness of spinning wheels instead of palaces; yet the people have not clothes. We have blackened every leaf of English green-wood with ashes, and the people die of cold; our harbors are a forest of merchant ships, and the people die of hunger.<sup>9</sup>

Poverty—of body and spirit—spreads wide; Ruskin multiplies examples of misery, of ennui, of ugliness. The æsthetics from which he launched his wider criticism retains his interest and helps to differentiate his judgments from those of his contemporaries.

Yet Ruskin was never content with theorizing about art, sociology, or economics, or even with criticizing contemporary life from the standpoint of his theories; he cannot be reproached, as Carlyle has been, for want of specific proposals for reform. The various attempts he made to advertise his ideas—by road-building (Oxford students learned the need, if not the advantages, of manual labor), street-cleaning, establishing a tea-shop (no advertising and best quality), and helping to maintain ancient handicrafts on the Isle of Man—had at least the success of publicity. The most famous of Ruskin's projects, Saint George's Guild, was again an advertisement of his ideas: masterhood, coöperation, education, guild control of product, abolition of steam-machinery. The high hopes Ruskin had for the experiment were disappointed rapidly, and almost completely.<sup>1</sup> The vows of the members were somewhat arbitrary, including implicit obedience to the Master; regulations of daily lives extended even to an *index expurgatorius* of the classics.<sup>2</sup> It is evident that at times in his practical projects Ruskin ignored the discretion he had once remarked upon: "In a science dealing with so subtle elements as those of human nature, it is only possible to answer for the final truth of principles, not for the direct success of plans; and . . . in the best of these last, what can be immediately accomplished is

<sup>8</sup> *Unto This Last* (xvii), pp. 98, 104.

<sup>9</sup> *Crown of Wild Olive* (xviii), p. 502.

<sup>1</sup> Sheffield Museum is, however, a relic of the Guild.

<sup>2</sup> *Fors Clavigera*, vi (xxviii), 500 f.



always questionable, and what can be finally accomplished, inconceivable"<sup>3</sup> Yet, on the other hand, the housing reforms he instituted in the slums of London under the management of Octavia Hill were highly influential<sup>4</sup> Ruskin realized the almost superficial nature of such work "The best that can be done in this way will be useless ultimately, unless the deep source of the misery be cut off"<sup>5</sup> But again Ruskin's work called attention to his ideas—to his criticism of cities. Fit lodging for the poor is an immediate need, he knows, yet the way is long and difficult

And providing lodgment for them means a great deal of vigorous legislation, and cutting down of vested interests that stand in the way, and after that, or before that, so far as we can get it, thorough sanitary and remedial action in the houses that we have, and then the building of more, strongly, beautifully, and in groups of limited extent, kept in proportion to their streams and walled round, so that there may be no festering and wretched suburb anywhere, but clean and busy street within, and the open country without, with a belt of beautiful garden and orchard round the walls, so that from any part of the city perfectly fresh air and grass, and sight of far horizon, might be reachable in a few minutes' walk. This the final aim, but in immediate action every minor and possible good to be instantly done, when, and as, we can, roofs mended that have holes in them—fences patched that have gaps in them—walls buttressed that totter—and floors propped that shake, cleanliness and order enforced with our own hands and eyes, till we are breathless, every day<sup>6</sup>

Once more Ruskin makes proposals which might seem Utopian. The garden cities of today, and the great development of municipal low-cost housing in England since the World War suggest that in this respect as in many others Ruskin's theories and reforms have proved practical.<sup>7</sup>

#### IV

RUSKIN's social criticism is more definite than that of his avowed master Carlyle in proposals for reform, and Ruskin becomes detailed and analytical in his consideration of education and economics, whereas Carlyle furnishes only generalizations—forceful and stimulating, but

<sup>3</sup> *Unto This Last* (xvii), p. 23

<sup>4</sup> See Cook, *The Life of Ruskin*, II, 118 ff

<sup>5</sup> *Fors Clavigera*, I (xxvii), 144

<sup>6</sup> *Sesame and Lilies* (xviii), p. 183

<sup>7</sup> See E. T. Cook, *Life of Ruskin*, II, 137 ff., and Whitehouse, ed., *Ruskin the Prophet, passim*. Notice might be made of government training for youth, old age pensions, unemployment fund

undeveloped. Nor is Carlyle in his social writings attentive to beauty, or to the importance of art in society. As they express their attitudes toward work, the two men differ. Work is a duty to Carlyle: "the God-given mandate, *Work thou in Well-doing*, lies mysteriously written, in Promethean Prophetic Characters, in our hearts"<sup>8</sup> And again Carlyle writes: "The latest Gospel in this world is, Know thy work and do it." For "a man perfects himself by working. The blessed glow of Labour is in him, is it not as purifying fire, wherein all poison is burnt up, and of sour smoke itself there is made bright blessed flame!" Work as a means of developing oneself, as a duty—these are Carlyle's ideas. Not for happiness in work or in the results of it does Carlyle plead. "The 'wages' of every noble Work do yet lie in Heaven or else Nowhere."<sup>9</sup> Happiness is not Carlyle's aim, "'there is in man,'" says Teufelsdröckh, "'a Higher than Love of Happiness he can do without Happiness, and instead thereof find Blessedness!'"<sup>1</sup> But for Ruskin happiness is an aim in life—joy in the aspect of the world and in the arts, and joy in creative work. Work is valuable in itself, Ruskin asserts, as opposed to idleness, but the kind and object of labor need to be considered;<sup>2</sup> and Ruskin undertakes an analysis of work which Carlyle disregards.

In many instances one must go outside the field of literature to find contemporary parallels for Ruskin's analyses and reforms, parallels useful in illuminating Ruskin's thought but seldom illustrating influence in either direction. One finds not in England but in France, in the writings of Auguste Comte, the body of ideas which most closely corresponds with Ruskin's upon sociological aesthetics: in the stress both men give to the importance of art in the development of the individual (by means of creative activity or education) and in the perfecting of society; in their attitudes toward the effect of society upon art; in their consideration of the relations of art and industry.<sup>3</sup> But Ruskin arrived at his theories independently and introduced them into English social criticism and reform.

Indeed, Ruskin's ignorance of the thought of his contemporaries (the "General Index" of the Library Edition reveals the omissions. Socialists, economists, educational theorists, aestheticians) is a notable cause

<sup>8</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, in *Works*, Centenary Edition, 30 vols. (New York, 1896-1901), II, 146.

<sup>9</sup> Carlyle, *Past and Present*, *ibid.*, x, 196, 203.

<sup>1</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, *ibid.*, I, 153.

<sup>2</sup> *Crown of Wild Olive* (xviii), 389 f.

<sup>3</sup> H. A. Needham has traced the similarities with some care, pp. 114 ff.

of his failure to attract to himself a considerable body of followers. One can understand, for example, how he and the Positivists failed to work together by reference to the public debate between him and Frederic Harrison in 1876. Ruskin having seen an article that Harrison, whom he knew and liked, had written on Positivism, "a gushing article on Humanity," replies in an open letter, punning on the name of Comte, asking for results of evolution, and declaring: "I don't find the advocates of Evolution much given to studying either men, women, or roses; I perceive them to be mostly occupied with frogs and lice"<sup>4</sup> A month later, Harrison, who allowed no one to take the name of Comte in vain, published his answer in the *Fortnightly Review*<sup>5</sup> He tells Ruskin of Comte's admiration for and understanding of the Middle Ages and suggests that Ruskin look at Comte's books Ruskin with other prophets has impeded science; hope in the human race must be founded on patience and "in a wider survey of men and things."<sup>6</sup> Harrison also writes directly to Ruskin "I owe you," he declares, "and the age owes you, profound gratitude for much noble teaching; and it is very sad to me to find you reviling other teachers to whom we owe much, and who know a thousand things about which you have told us nothing."<sup>7</sup> Ruskin ends the debate

The only word I have applied to Comte, in my whole letter, is "unique." . . . I have never read a word he has written,—never heard anything about him that interested me,—and never represented, or misrepresented, him, in any manner whatsoever . . .

I did not write to my friend as a "student of Positivism," for I have no idea what positivism means<sup>8</sup>

The disagreement clearly illustrates Ruskin's disregard for contemporary thinkers, even for a thinker so close to him in one field of thought as Auguste Comte, and it displays an intolerance which might well have alienated the Positivists Frederic Harrison, whose "life may be described as an attempt to introduce Comte's Humanist sociology into England,"<sup>9</sup> for twenty years leader of English Positivism, may well speak for his group. Yet Harrison himself continued to find Ruskin praiseworthy, and wrote of him at length many years later in *Tenny-*

<sup>4</sup> *Fors Clavigera*, VI (xxviii), 614, 622

<sup>5</sup> Frederic Harrison, "Past and Present," *Fortnightly Review*, xx (July 1, 1876), 93-105

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in *Fors Clavigera*, vi (xxviii), 662

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 663 f

<sup>9</sup> "Frederic Harrison," *Encyclopædia Britannica* (fourteenth edition, 1932), xi, 219.

son, *Ruskin, Mill, and Other Literary Estimates*, commending his "noble Evangel," remarking, "I believe that his teachers and my teachers are essentially one, and may yet be combined in the greater harmony that is to be."<sup>1</sup>

Ruskin was not a member of any contemporary group; nor did any significant body of reformers in the later years of the century take Ruskin as master. Let Edward Pease speak for the Fabians as he surveys the sources of Fabian thought

I have not included the writings of Ruskin, Socialist in outlook as some of them undoubtedly are, because I think that the value of his social teachings was concealed from most of us at that time by reaction against his religious medievalism, and indifference to his gospel of art. Books so eminently adapted to young ladies at mid Victorian schools did not appeal to modernists educated by Comte and Spencer.<sup>2</sup>

Bernard Shaw adds a comment verifying Pease:

It is a curious fact that of the three great propagandist amateurs of political economy, Henry George, Marx, and Ruskin, Ruskin alone seems to have had no effect on the Fabians. Here and there in the Socialist movement workmen turned up who had read *Fors Clavigera* or *Unto This Last*, and some of the more well to do no doubt had read the first chapter of *Munera Pulveris*. But Ruskin's name was hardly mentioned in the Fabian Society. My explanation is that, barring Olivier, the Fabians were inveterate Philistines.<sup>3</sup>

Whatever the explanation, neither the Fabians nor any other influential body accepted from Ruskin their distinctive theories of society or reform.<sup>4</sup>

There were, it is true, numerous Ruskin Societies, as well as the Guild of St. George. "They had," Cook declares, "a considerable effect in spreading Ruskin's influence and increasing the circulation of his books, which it should be remembered had for many years been neither advertised nor noticed in the newspapers."<sup>5</sup> But these Societies, instrumental in spreading Ruskin's teaching, were not composed of eminent men. Perhaps the most notable publication of a Ruskin Society was the

<sup>1</sup> New York: The Macmillan Co., 1902, pp. 50 f.

<sup>2</sup> Edward R. Pease, *History of the Fabian Society* (London, 1916), p. 27.

<sup>3</sup> Bernard Shaw, "Appendix," *ibid.*, p. 263.

<sup>4</sup> Indirectly, through William Morris, Ruskin's ideas penetrated English Socialism, see below, pp. 216 ff.

<sup>5</sup> Cook, *Life of Ruskin*, II, 443, see also John A. Hobson, *John Ruskin, Social Reformer* (Boston, 1898), pp. 349 ff.

quarterly, *Saint George*, founded in 1898, under the editorship of John Howard Whitehouse. The articles of this magazine, with few exceptions, were devoted to generous and uncritical praise of Ruskin, with broad interpretations of his work in art, morals, and society.<sup>6</sup> Ruskin College, founded in 1899 at Oxford, pays tribute to Ruskin in its name, and Ruskin's teaching "furnished a frame of reference for the students who started it. . . . 'Unto This Last' served to give unity and purpose to their enterprise. Despite all the wrangles, battles, and deviations, Ruskin's teachings furnished a kind of anchor against storms, in the early days of the labor college." <sup>7</sup> And Ruskin College has been influential in the education of labor leaders of the twentieth century.

It was, however, chiefly through individuals that Ruskin's social criticism penetrated into the thought of the late nineteenth century. Men who had personal relations with Ruskin—George Allen, who applied Ruskin's principles to the book trade; biographers and editors of Ruskin's work: William Collingwood, Sir Edward T. Cook, and Alexander Wedderburn—these men have been well known as disciples of Ruskin; as has Octavia Hill, whose early work under Ruskin in the tenement districts of London has borne fruit. They have helped to spread Ruskin's ideas. Yet they are not eminent as independent thinkers. It is rather to other men that one looks to see the acceptance of Ruskin's ideas. Among the immediate followers of Ruskin, those men who took some of their basic themes directly from Ruskin's writing, three stand out,<sup>8</sup> for the distinction of their own work and for the extent of their indebtedness to Ruskin. William Morris, craftsman and socialist; Patrick Geddes, biologist and city-planner; and John A. Hobson, economist. Morris's discipleship is common knowledge. Geddes declared his debt to Ruskin in two brief studies of him and by frequent references to his writing; the merit of Geddes's own work is coming to slow recognition among literary students in America, especially since Lewis Mumford in two of his latest books, *The Technics of Civilization* and *The Culture of Cities*, has proclaimed Geddes his master. John A. Hobson has been one of the leading economists of the past generation;<sup>9</sup> he has also contributed the most valuable analysis of Ruskin's

<sup>6</sup> *Saint George*, ed. John Howard Whitehouse, Birmingham and London, 1 (1898), etc.

<sup>7</sup> Charles A. Beard, "Ruskin and the Babble of Tongues," *New Republic*, xxxvii (August 5, 1936), 372; see also Max Beer, *History of British Socialism*, 2 vols. (London, 1919-20), II, 352.

<sup>8</sup> Others: W. H. Mallock, Edward Carpenter, Arnold Toynbee, William Smart.

<sup>9</sup> See Paul Homan, "John A. Hobson," *Contemporary Economic Thought* (New York, 1928).

social criticism, *John Ruskin, Social Reformer*, published in 1898. In that book and in various articles since, and in his recent autobiography *Confessions of an Economic Heretic*, Hobson asserts his own discipleship.<sup>1</sup>

These men cannot be termed followers merely. They selected from Ruskin's writings those ideas which seemed significant to them; and they amplified those ideas in various ways and made new applications of them. In doing so, they repaid to a degree their debt to Ruskin. For, qualifying their praise, they recognized and avoided many of the weaknesses in Ruskin which in his own day impeded acceptance of his thought and which still repel many readers. The extravagance of Ruskin—the almost hysterical denunciations, the occasional wildly erratic judgments, the purple patches of his early style, the incoherence of *Fors Clavigera*—typify to more temperate critics the excesses of romanticism. Such faults suggest "hyperaesthesia" and sometimes incipient madness. They show too the distressing egotism which appears also in Ruskin's moralizing. And didacticism is no longer fashionable. Perhaps "the will of God in the earth alters"; perhaps a dogmatic exposition of the divine plan seems increasingly to be impertinent. Ruskin was extravagant; his followers pruned their styles and more carefully pondered their judgments. Ruskin was didactic; his followers substituted persuasion for lecture and suggestion for sermon. And they did not follow Ruskin in deliberately eschewing much contemporary thought. They read Ruskin, but they listened to other social critics—Morris to Marx, Geddes to Comte and Darwin, Hobson to economists old and new. Consequently they have a balance and a fullness in their social criticism which Ruskin often lacks. Avoiding Ruskin's shortcomings, they attract readers whom Ruskin repels; and through them Ruskin's ideas achieve wider currency among social critics and pass into the thought of the twentieth century.

That blending of other forces with his helped to maintain the vitality of Ruskin's ideas and to widen the application of them. The writings of Morris, Geddes, Hobson illustrate how Ruskin's ideas were selected from, were modified, and were amplified toward the turn of the century. All three of these men—even Hobson, whose chief debt is to Ruskin's economics—follow Ruskin in his application of aesthetic principles to reform.

<sup>1</sup> Hobson, *Confessions* (New York, 1938).

## V

From the early fifties, when he read aloud to Burne-Jones and others of his friends at Oxford from *The Stones of Venice*, until he made his last pronouncements upon Socialism, Morris bore warm testimony to the value of Ruskin's writings—to the Victorian age and to himself. In "How I Became a Socialist," written for *Justice* in 1894, Morris, speaking of mid-Victorian England, writes:

Lastly, there were a few who were in open rebellion against the said Whiggery—a few, say two, Carlyle and Ruskin. The latter, before my days of practical Socialism, was my master towards the ideal aforesaid,<sup>2</sup> and, looking backward, I cannot help saying, by the way, how deadly dull the world would have been twenty years ago but for Ruskin! It was through him that I learned to give form to my discontent, which I must say was not by any means vague. Apart from the desire to produce beautiful things, the leading passion of my life has been and is hatred of modern civilization.<sup>3</sup>

Often, moreover, Morris defines the segments of his thought for which or in which he is indebted to Ruskin. When R. M. Stevenson referred slightly to Ruskin's work at an Art Congress in Edinburgh, Morris made no mincing defense: "That's all nonsense! Why, man, Ruskin has made Art possible for us!"<sup>4</sup> And in his lectures on art, such praise as this recurs: "It would be ungracious indeed for me who have been so much taught by him that I cannot help feeling continually as I speak that I am echoing his words, to leave out the name of John Ruskin from an account of what has happened since the tide, as we hope, began to turn in the direction of art."<sup>5</sup> In particular, Morris found in Ruskin the meaning of medieval art: "By a marvellous inspiration of genius (I can call it nothing else) he attained at one leap to a true conception of mediaeval art which years of minute study had not gained for others."<sup>6</sup> Ruskin had found that art was the expression of the society which produced it; and he had found the source of greatness in

<sup>2</sup> The ideal of a socialistic society; Morris does not enter "practical" Socialism till after 1880.

<sup>3</sup> "How I Became a Socialist," in *Collected Works*, ed. May Morris, 24 vols. (London, 1910-15), xxiii, 279. All future references to the works of Morris will be, unless otherwise specified, to this edition. Each volume will be identified in the edition by a number in parenthesis after the title.

<sup>4</sup> Arthur Compton-Rickett, *William Morris, a Study in Personality* (London, 1913), p. 54.

<sup>5</sup> *Hopes and Fears for Art* (xxii), pp. 56 f.

<sup>6</sup> "The Revival of Architecture" (xxii), p. 323.

medieval art—that the social life of the Middle Ages allowed the workman freedom of individual expression.<sup>7</sup> In this latter discovery was the basis, Morris declares, of his own chief accusation against modern society: the impossibility of pleasurable work.<sup>8</sup> With Ruskin himself in the chair, as Morris lectured at Oxford, Morris declared his doctrine and the source of it:

ART IS MAN'S EXPRESSION OF HIS JOY IN LABOUR. If those are not Professor Ruskin's words, they embody at least his teaching on the subject. Nor has any truth more important ever been stated; for if pleasure in labour be generally possible, what a strange folly it must be for men to consent to labour without pleasure; and what a hideous injustice it must be for society to compel most men to labour without pleasure.<sup>9</sup>

This tonic theme of Morris, in both art and social criticism, he learned from *The Stones of Venice*, from the chapter in it "The Nature of Gothic," which he called, as he published it separately at the Kelmscott Press in 1892, "one of the very few necessary and inevitable utterances of the century."<sup>1</sup> Here is a final tribute:

John Ruskin the critic of art has not only given the keenest pleasure to thousands of his readers by his lifelike descriptions, and the ingenuity and delicacy of his analysis of works of art, but he has let a flood of daylight into the cloud of sham-technical twaddle which was once the whole substance of "art-criticism," and still is its staple, and that is much. But it is far more that John Ruskin the teacher of morals and politics (I do not use the word in the newspaper sense), has done serious and solid work towards that new-birth of Society, without which genuine art, the expression of man's pleasure in his handiwork, must inevitably cease altogether, and with it the hopes of the happiness of mankind.<sup>2</sup>

Ruskin has supplied, it is evident, some of the fundamentals in Morris's conceptions of art, of contemporary society, and of ideal life. This relationship of Morris's thought to Ruskin's has been regularly recognized by his biographers and by the critics of his work, and some of these many writers have been detailed in the comparisons they make,

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> "Art under Plutocracy" (xxii), p. 173

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*; cf. *Hopes and Fears for Art* (xxii), pp. 5, 139 f.

<sup>1</sup> "Preface to *The Nature of Gothic*, by John Ruskin," in *William Morris, Artist, Writer, Socialist*, ed. May Morris, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1936), I, 292. This preface is printed also in *The Works of Ruskin*, ed. Cook and Wedderburn (The Library Edition), x, 460 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 295.



and in the ascriptions.<sup>3</sup> Critics of Ruskin also speak of Morris's discipleship, though more briefly.<sup>4</sup> Both groups stress Morris's acceptance of some of Ruskin's ideas on art and on social reform. Thus Gustav Fritzsche, delimiting four stages of Morris's work—a state of purely artistic writing, a stage of social reform, a socialistic stage, and a communistic—devotes attention to Ruskin in the first two.<sup>5</sup> There is, Fritzsche asserts, close articulation among these various stages (indeed it may be said against Fritzsche that demarcation of the third from the fourth is highly disputable); and probably he takes for granted the continuance into the later stages of doctrines developed earlier. Nevertheless it is true that none of the most extended criticisms of Morris's Socialism—in addition to Fritzsche's, those of Mrs. Helmholtz-Phelan and of Édouard Guyot—lays stress upon this fact that the humanistic ideal of Morris's Socialism, that aspect of his doctrine which is one of its distinctive features, is a Ruskinian ideal. Many elements, for instance, in *News from Nowhere* which contrast most clearly with the materialistic Utopia of Edward Bellamy<sup>6</sup>—beauty, art, work, opposition to mechanics—these elements came largely from Ruskin. In the means to the new state, revolution and Socialism—there, however, Morris moves at right angles to Ruskin; and in Morris's desire for equality and freedom as well as for brotherhood, he and Ruskin are again in flat opposition. How Morris, having accepted Socialism (and indeed Marxism) in the early eighties, nevertheless retained in his social ideals various esthetic and humanistic principles which he learned from Ruskin, needs to be elucidated.

Morris's thought upon sociological aesthetics is largely a reflection of Ruskin's; but he makes fresh application of Ruskin's principles. He uses Ruskin's doctrine that art is a reflection of the society which produces it as an argument against restoration of ancient buildings—one of the topics which led him into public lecturing and ultimately into

<sup>3</sup> See especially, among the biographers J. W. Mackail, *The Life of William Morris*, 2 vols. (London, 1899), *passim*, and Compton Rickett, *William Morris* pp. 247–57, among the critics of Morris as artist and art theorist, Aymer Vallance, *William Morris His Art, His Writings and His Public Life* (London, 1897), *passim* and among the critics of Morris as reformer, Gustav Fritzsche, *William Morris's Sozialismus und Anarchistischer Kommunismus, Darstellung des Systems und Untersuchung der Quellen* (Kolner Anglistische Arbeiten (Leipzig, 1927), pp. 13 ff., Anna A. Helmholtz-Phelan, *The Social Philosophy of William Morris* (Durham, North Carolina, 1927), *passim*, and Édouard Guyot, *Le socialisme et l'évolution de l'Angleterre contemporaine, 1880–1913* (Paris, 1913), pp. 379 ff.

<sup>4</sup> See Hobson, *John Ruskin*, pp. 326 ff., and Frederick William Roe, *The Social Philosophy of Carlyle and Ruskin* (New York, 1921), pp. 310 ff.

<sup>5</sup> Fritzsche, *William Morris's Sozialismus*, pp. 9 ff.

<sup>6</sup> See below, p. 225.

Socialism. Ancient buildings, both works of art and monuments of history, cannot be replaced by imitative art, which will only destroy them both as art and as history.<sup>7</sup> It would be absurd to suppose that Greek workmen could have erected Gothic buildings; it is just as absurd to expect much of Victorian Gothic; Victorian imitations are a "trick of masquerading in other men's cast-off clothes."<sup>8</sup> In 1893 Morris made a particularly vigorous plea to save the interior of Westminster Abbey from the restoration which had already spoiled the outside of the building, and in doing so he made one of the most vivid statements of his point of view:

Rewrite the lost trilogies of Aeschylus, put a beginning and end to the "Fight at Finsbury," finish the Squire's Tale for Chaucer, even if you cannot  
"call him up who left half-told"

The story of Cambuscan bold,"

and if you can succeed in that, you may then "restore" Westminster Abbey.<sup>9</sup>

Morris gives more attention to the decorative arts than Ruskin did. The decorative arts provide two pleasures—pleasure in use, pleasure in manufacture. Once all handicraftsmen were artists; and "everything which was made by man's hands was more or less beautiful." Contemporary museums justify this statement, for the "Common household goods" of past times "form the bulk of the objects that fill our museums." And students are sent to them, "the mere wreckage of a bygone art," for models, and not to the best work of Victorian artists. What of the Victorian decorative arts? "Well, need one ask what sort of a figure the wreckage of our ornamental art would cut in a museum of the twenty-fourth century?"<sup>1</sup> Both by theory and example Morris gave impulse to a whole movement in the decorative arts, best represented by the work of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society and by the writings of Walter Crane.<sup>2</sup> Through this movement many of Ruskin's ideas received wider circulation.

The pitiful results of Victorian so-called "manufacture" were only one aspect of the "inevitable ugliness" of "civilization as it now is." That ugliness is for Morris a central point of attack upon the society he

<sup>7</sup> *Hopes and Fears for Art* (xxu), p. 69, cf. also *ibid.*, p. 19, "The History of Pattern-Designing," (xxu), p. 234; "Architecture and History" (xxu), p. 320.

<sup>8</sup> "Architecture and History" (xxu), pp. 314 f.

<sup>9</sup> "Westminster Abbey" (xxu), pp. 418 f.

<sup>1</sup> *Hopes and Fears for Art* (xxu), pp. 5, 9; "Art, Wealth, and Riches" (xxu), p. 145; "Art and the Beauty of the Earth" (xxu), p. 162; "Art, Wealth, and Riches" (xxu), p. 145

<sup>2</sup> See Needham, pp. 184 ff.

lived in, as it was with Ruskin. The earth, Morris finds, is "growing uglier day by day, and there the swiftest where civilization is the mightiest." Ugliness of wares, the smoke nuisance, the litter of sandwich-papers in the country, "the increasing hideousness of the posters with which all our towns are daubed"<sup>3</sup>—all life is infected. Here is one of Morris's most forceful statements:

Not only are London and our other great commercial cities mere masses of sordidness, filth, and squalor, embroidered with patches of pompous and vulgar hideousness, no less revolting to the eye and the mind when one knows what it means: not only have whole counties of England, and the heavens that hang over them, disappeared beneath a crust of unutterable grime, but the disease, which to a visitor coming from the times of art, reason, and order, would seem to be a love of dirt and ugliness for its own sake, spreads all over the country, and every little market-town seizes the opportunity to imitate, as far as it can, the majesty of the hell of London and Manchester.<sup>4</sup>

Even the rich, he recalls in *News from Nowhere*, lived among sights and sounds and smells abhorrent—in, for example, the "brick-and-mortar county of London," "the spreading sore of London." The contemporary workman is "lodged in a sweltering dog-hole, with miles and miles of similar dog-holes between him and the fair fields of the country, which in grim mockery is called 'his.' Sometimes on holidays, bundled out by train to have a look at it, to be bundled into his grimy hell again in the evening. Poor wretch!" Against Victorian houses Morris's attack is especially vehement, against "those strange dwellings—the basest, ugliest, and the most inconvenient that men have ever built for themselves, and which our own haste, necessity, and stupidity compel almost all of us to live in." The rich, the middle-class in their "jerry-built houses of our suburbs,"<sup>5</sup> and the poor—all of them live ignobly: "if you could clear your eyes from habitual blindness you would have to confess that there is no crime against art, no ugliness, no vulgarity which is not shared with perfect fairness and equality between the modern hovels of Bethnal Green and the modern palaces of the West End."<sup>6</sup> Such condemnation, expressed often in Morris's most

<sup>3</sup> *Hopes and Fears for Art* (xxii), pp. 122, 125, 71 f.

<sup>4</sup> "Art under Plutocracy" (xxiii), p. 170.

<sup>5</sup> *News from Nowhere* (xvi), p. 94; "Address to Birmingham Students" (xxii), p. 423; "Art and Socialism" (xxiii), p. 207; "Architecture and History" (xxii), p. 313; *Hopes and Fears for Art* (xxii), p. 83; "Revival of Architecture" (xxii), p. 329.

<sup>6</sup> *Hopes and Fears for Art* (xxii), p. 124.

striking concreteness, was one stimulus to the housing movements at the end of the century.

Even so, this ugliness was a symbol of deeper evils—of slavish, fearful lives for the workers, of empty, unwholesome lives for the rich: unhappiness and degradation. "I am not pleading," Morris writes, "for the production of a little more beauty in the world, much as I love it, and much as I would sacrifice for its sake; it is the lives of human beings that I am pleading for." These are his "claims for decent life": "First, a healthy body; second, an active mind in sympathy with the past, the present, and the future; thirdly, occupation fit for a healthy body and an active mind; and fourthly, a beautiful world to live in."<sup>7</sup> These claims Victorian society denied; the attainment of them was the object of Morris's reforms. G. D. H. Cole makes this compact and significant summary:

From the first he wanted two things above all, and saw in these two things the keys to the regeneration of the life of Society. He wanted to surround ordinary men with beauty instead of ugliness, to ensure them pleasure and satisfaction in the common objects of daily use and enjoyment—in the face of the land, in the dwellings upon it, and in the utensils and amenities of everyday living. And he wanted no less that men should find pleasure and satisfaction in their daily work, that labour should cease to be an irksome imposition, and should become for most men, as it was for him, a natural and necessary means of self-expression.<sup>8</sup>

Beauty of environment, pleasure in work—Morris adopts both aims from Ruskin. As Ruskin went beyond Carlyle in adding pleasure to the value of work, so Morris, building upon Ruskin's foundation, stresses that pleasure, analyzes the elements of it, and examines the reasons for the loss of it in Victorian England.<sup>9</sup>

Without pleasurable work, "the surest and most constant of pleasures, the unfailing solace of misfortune, happy and honourable work," "the kindest and best gift that the world has ever had," happiness is impossible for men.<sup>1</sup> In his most fully developed discussion of the topic of work: "Useful Work *versus* Useless Toil,"<sup>2</sup> Morris finds in pleasure

<sup>7</sup> *Signs of Change* (xxiii), p. 10, "Art and Its Producers" (xxu), p. 352, *Signs of Change* (xxiii), p. 25

<sup>8</sup> G. D. H. Cole, "William Morris," *Revaluations*, by Lascelles Abercrombie *et al* (London, 1931), p. 140.

<sup>9</sup> See Fritzsche, *William Morris's Sozialismus*, pp. 11 ff; and J. Bruce Glasier, *William Morris and the Early Days of the Socialist Movement* (London, 1921), pp. 142 ff.

<sup>1</sup> "Art, Wealth, and Riches" (xxiii), p. 152; "Art and the Beauty of the Earth" (xxu), p. 165; see *News from Nowhere* (xvi), p. 92, and *Hopes and Fears for Art* (xxii), p. 139.

<sup>2</sup> *Signs of Change* (xxiii), pp. 98 ff.

Nature's compensation for compulsion to labor; in labor just as in other matters "she takes care to make the acts necessary to the continuance of life in the individual and the race not only endurable, but even pleasurable."<sup>3</sup> And if that pleasure is lost: "I say that if the workmen lack any part of it, they will be so far degraded, but that if they lack it altogether they are, so far as their work goes, I will not say slaves, the word would not be strong enough, but machines more or less conscious of their own unhappiness."<sup>4</sup> Perhaps the leading function of art is to provide such pleasure.<sup>5</sup> Popular art, indeed, means the end of dull work; with its revival there would no longer be excuse to talk of the curse of labor. In *News from Nowhere* Morris's attitudes are exemplified: "'Fancy people not liking to work!' Dick Hammond exclaims: 'It's too ridiculous.'" Though there is even a fear that some day may come a scarcity of work, this is unfounded; there is no real danger of a work-famine, for art and science are inexhaustible. What is the incentive to work among the Utopians?

"No reward of labour?" said Hammond gravely. "The reward of labour is *life*. Is that not enough?"<sup>6</sup>

For especially good work, there is plenty of reward—the reward of creation. Elsewhere Morris makes the same point—men of special talents need not be bribed to exercise them;<sup>7</sup> "the only reward that you *can* give the excellent workman is opportunity for developing and exercising his excellent capacity."<sup>8</sup> Finally, Morris declares, it is "the chief duty of the civilized world today . . . to set about making labour happy for all, to do its utmost to minimize the amount of unhappy labour. . . . When a new order of things has been achieved, where shall we turn for happiness except to daily labour?" What, then, of reduction of hours?

Shall all we can do with it be to shorten the hours of that toil to the utmost, that the hours of leisure may be long beyond what men used to hope for? and what then shall we do with the leisure, if we say that all toil is irksome? Shall we sleep it all away?—Yes, and never wake up again, I should hope, in that case.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98.

<sup>4</sup> "Art under Plutocracy" (xxiii), p. 175; see *Hopes and Fears for Art* (xxii), p. 43.

<sup>5</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 5, 42.

<sup>6</sup> *News from Nowhere* (xvi), pp. 40, 91, 92, 98.

<sup>7</sup> "Architecture and History" (xxii), p. 307.

<sup>8</sup> *Signs of Change* (xxiii), p. 137.

<sup>9</sup> *Hopes and Fears for Art* (xxii), pp. 33, 43.

Morris does more than emphasize with Ruskin pleasure in labor; he searches for the elements of it. They are chiefly three—"variety, hope of creation, and the self-respect which comes of a sense of usefulness; to which must be added that mysterious bodily pleasure which goes with the deft exercise of the bodily powers"<sup>1</sup> Creative work brings bodily pleasure and more

I think that to all living things there is a pleasure in the exercise of their energies, and that even beasts rejoice in being lithe and swift and strong. But a man at work, making something which he feels will exist because he is working at it and wills it, is exercising the energies of his mind and soul as well as of his body.<sup>2</sup>

Variety of work, hope of leisure—these also are needed. For the pain, present to some degree in all labor, the compensation is rest, moreover, "it is necessary, unless workmen of all grades are to be permanently degraded into machines, that the hand should rest the mind as well as the mind and the hand."<sup>3</sup> Work should be neither overanxious nor overwearisome. Nor should one other element be neglected—the pleasant surroundings in which the work should be done.<sup>4</sup>

Morris follows Ruskin in opposing mechanical work. The difference between intelligent work and mechanical work is 'the difference between light and darkness'.<sup>5</sup> Such work is the result of the division of labor, growing since the time of the Reformation and almost complete by the middle of the eighteenth century, 'the workman becomes "the perfect machine which it is his ultimate duty to become"'.<sup>6</sup> It needs to be said, however, that Morris would not abolish the factory system in the new order, since there are some tasks men may best, and cheerfully, perform in groups, but he advocates extreme restriction. Another type of work Morris opposes, work with machinery, for such work completes the degradation of the workman.<sup>8</sup> Himself reduced to a machine in the eighteenth century, he has become "a slave to a machine." Morris refuses the term "labor saving" machinery, for it did not spare the workman (Morris quotes Mill, to agree with him), thus "the phrase labour-

<sup>1</sup> *Art and Plutocracy* (xxiii), p. 174

<sup>2</sup> *Signs of Change* (xxiii), p. 100

<sup>3</sup> 'Art and the Beauty of the Earth' (xlii), p. 164

<sup>4</sup> *Signs of Change* (xxiii), p. 21

<sup>5</sup> *Hopes and Fears for Art* (xxii), p. 146

<sup>6</sup> "Architecture and History" (xxii), pp. 309 ff

<sup>7</sup> *Signs of Change* (xxiii), p. 68

<sup>8</sup> See Cole, "William Morris," *Revaluations*, pp. 13 ff, for a penetrating discussion of this topic

saving machinery is elliptical, and means machinery which saves the cost of labour, not the labour itself, which will be expended when saved on tending other machines."<sup>9</sup> Again Morris would restrict but not abolish a type of work; the use of machinery that he approves is much wider than what Ruskin accepts. "Under a happier state of things [machines] would be used simply for saving labour."<sup>1</sup> Indeed, in *News from Nowhere*, machinery is perfected, machinery and its use as well: "All work which would be irksome to do by hand is done by immensely improved machinery; and in all work which it is a pleasure to do by hand machinery is done without."<sup>2</sup>

Unvaried, uncreative, mechanical work has taken away happiness from men; that fact is so important to Morris that he can declare: In spite of the great gains Europe has achieved since the end of the Middle Ages—" . . . freedom of thought, increase of knowledge, and huge talent for dealing with the material forces of nature; comparative political freedom withal and respect for the lives of civilized men, and other gains that go with these things: nevertheless I say deliberately that if the present state of society is to endure, she has bought these gains at too high a price in the loss of the pleasure in daily work which once did certainly solace the mass of men for their fears and oppressions."<sup>3</sup> And as he views Victorian England, he finds there an "enormous amount of pleasureless work—work that tires every muscle of the body and every atom of the brain, and which is done without pleasure and without aim."<sup>4</sup> Division of labor, mechanized industry—these are essential to the commercial organization of England; variety, creative work, even pleasant surroundings—none of these does the system permit.<sup>5</sup>

As he proposes his alternative, communistic socialism, Morris makes use of ideas from Fourier, from Marx, from Ruskin. Though Morris recognizes the reasonableness of the question: What will life be like after a socialist revolution? he acknowledges too the difficulty of answering: "When I try to picture the forms which that life will take, I confess I am at fault, and I think we must all be so."<sup>6</sup> *News from Nowhere*, as its subtitle *A Utopian Romance* indicates, cannot be used as a literal expression of Morris's vision of the future society; it does, how-

<sup>9</sup> "Architecture and History" (xxii), p. 311; "Art under Plutocracy" (xxiii), p. 180.

<sup>1</sup> *Signs of Change* (xxiii), p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> *News from Nowhere* (xvi), p. 97.

<sup>3</sup> "Art and Socialism" (xxiii), p. 203.

<sup>4</sup> *Hopes and Fears for Art* (xxii), p. 44.

<sup>5</sup> "Art and the Beauty of the Earth" (xxii), p. 164.

<sup>6</sup> *Commonweal* (1889), in *William Morris*, ed. May Morris, ii, 313.

ever, display Morris's attitudes and his social ideals, particularly if contrasted with Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*.

Bellamy's civilization remains a business civilization, reflecting the temperament of the author. Here is Morris's opinion of both:

. . . and of course his temperament may be called the unmixed modern one, unhistoric and unartistic: it makes its owner (if a Socialist) perfectly satisfied with modern civilization, if only the injustice, misery, and waste of class society could be got rid of, which half change seems possible to him. The only ideal of life which such a man can see is that of the industrious *professional* middle-class men of to day purified from their crime of complicity with the monopolist class, and become independent instead of being, as they now are, parasitical . . . There are clear signs to show us that that very group whose life is thus put forward as an ideal for the future are condemning it in the present.<sup>7</sup>

Bellamy, Morris declares, "has his mind fixed on the mere machinery of life." And Bellamy's stress upon machinery in its narrower, literal sense Morris condemns. Of such mechanization Morris says: "it is not to be wondered at then that his only idea of making labour tolerable is to decrease the amount of it by means of fresh and ever fresh developments of machinery."<sup>8</sup> A "middle-class" society, mechanized and apparently, in spite of disclaimers, standardized—a highly efficient utilitarian Utopia—this was apparently Bellamy's ideal.

Variety and beauty become characterizing qualities of the England of *News from Nowhere*, they give richness to the book. Much of its charm lies in its setting—the brighter London, where gardens supplant slums; the pure-flowing Thames; and the old Kelmescott found again in a world with which it is now in concord—and in the diversity and beauty of characters, costumes, everyday wares.<sup>9</sup> Mechanization has no place in Morris's Utopia; and the setting is rustic, even in London, where an apricot orchard succeeds Trafalgar Square. There is variety of character and of interests—for Morris there would be no state-paid singers broadcasting by radio,<sup>1</sup> but spontaneous choruses. The art which is mentioned incidentally as an ornament of public buildings in *Looking Backward* has become a way of life in *News from Nowhere*.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 502 f

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 503, 505.

<sup>9</sup> See Oliver Elton, *Survey of English Literature, 1780-1880*, 4 vols (New York, 1920), iv, 31 f. "He is the sanest of all the English writers who have imagined an ideal state of things. . . . His new earth is not an abstraction"; and Paul Bloomfield, *William Morris* (London, 1934), pp. 282 ff.

<sup>1</sup> See Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward* (New York, 1927), p 111.



The Victorian guest first sees the results in the Hammersmith guest house, the lead roof above the red brick walls, the traceried windows, the frieze "designed with a directness and force which I had never noticed in modern work before" Art is a delight to the age; leisure is filled with color. The Revolution arrived, old Hammond says, "to make people happy." (Indeed happiness is the only preventive of counter-revolution.) And happiness has been achieved: "we pass our lives in reasonable strife with nature, exercising not one side of ourselves only, but all sides, taking the keenest pleasure in all the life of the world."<sup>2</sup> Fullness of life, with beauty an important feature of it, this has been achieved Happy work becomes an important feature of Morris's *Utopia*—much of it creative, little of it mechanical, some of the heaviest labor undertaken as a lark by young men (dressed as if for a boating party at Oxford); and for every man there is variety to give stimulus to his work

With these ideas Morris carries Ruskin's social aesthetics into British Socialism. That they are among the distinctive features of that Socialism has been frequently attested Bruce Glasier—a partial witness, it is true—has this to say of Morris's Socialism and of the Socialist League: "The influence of its early teaching, its high idealism, its communistic aim, its conception of fellowship as the basic principle of Socialism, and its emphasis on, not merely the political and economic claims of Labour, but the necessity of art and pleasure in work as a means of joy in life—these ideas, which were the staple of Morris's teaching, and infused by the League into the early movement, have remained germinal in its propaganda, and have helped to give British Socialism its distinctive character."<sup>3</sup> Among personal tributes is this of Shaw: "It is true that there was no lack of practised and even powerful speakers in the movement, spouting Marxianism, Fabianism, and all the other brands, but not one of them could propagate [Morris's] vision of the life to come on a happy earth, and his values that went so much deeper into eternity than the surplus value of Marx."<sup>4</sup> Finally G. D. H. Cole speaks:

*News from Nowhere* made me a Socialist; and I have never had cause to regret either the fact or the manner of the conversion. For I am sure that, in this part of his vision, William Morris had firm hold on the most abid-

<sup>2</sup> *News from Nowhere* (xvi), pp. 13, 58, 92

<sup>3</sup> Glasier, *William Morris*, p. 17

<sup>4</sup> George Bernard Shaw, *William Morris as I Knew Him* (New York, 1936), p. 50. This essay is also published as an introduction to *William Morris*, ed. May Morris, II, ix ff.

ing secret of personal happiness and social well-being—that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a people unhappy in its labour to enter into the earthly paradise. The truth remains with me—as firm a possession now as it has been ever since that far-off first reading of *News from Nowhere*. It has guided me in shaping my own life (and I have been lucky in the chance to shape it to the doing of work in which I can find satisfaction); and it has guided me no less in seeking to influence the shaping of the life of Society.<sup>5</sup>

Through such men as these—and through the whole group of Guild Socialists<sup>6</sup>—Morris's ideas have been carried deep into the twentieth century—Morris's ideas, and with them John Ruskin's.

## VI

THE varied activities of Patrick Geddes have been up to the present time merely suggested;<sup>7</sup> no comprehensive biography has yet appeared, though Geddes died in 1932; indeed, until the spring of 1936 no full bibliography of published writings and no list of unpublished writings had been made.<sup>8</sup> To do more than sketch the manifold interests—and accomplishments—of Patrick Geddes is unnecessary here; the variety of both substantiates the title American newspapers gave him: "a modern Leonardo."<sup>9</sup> Lewis Mumford recounts some of his work: "Eminent as a biologist, he wrote also on economics; as a sociologist, he was one of the principal founders of the Sociological Society of Great Britain; as a geographer, he was head of the Cities Movement in Great Britain, and his survey of Edinburgh helped to initiate the survey movement in England. He made town plans for fifty cities in India and Palestine, and planned also the Universities of Jerusalem and of Hyderabad. Moreover, he "anticipated Ostwald and Frederick Soddy in applying the concepts of energy to the social sciences." Yet, Mumford goes on, "it is as a vigorous systematic thinker . . . that Geddes will perhaps best be known one day."<sup>2</sup> And even this account omits a field

<sup>5</sup> Cole, "William Morris," *Revaluations* p 133

<sup>6</sup> See A J Penty, *Restoration of the Gild System* (1906), also Roe, *Social Philosophy of Carlyle and Ruskin*, pp 320 ff

<sup>7</sup> See "A Sheaf of Tributes to the Late Sir Patrick Geddes," *Sociological Review*, xxiv (1932), 349 f, also Lewis Mumford, "Who is Patrick Geddes?" *Survey*, lvi (1925), 522 ff, also P L Boardman, "Scottish Biologist, City Planner and Sociologist," *Commonweal*, xxi (1935), 729 ff.

<sup>8</sup> P. L. Boardman, *Esquisse de l'oeuvre éducative de Patrick Geddes* (Montpelier, 1936), pp. 169 ff.

<sup>9</sup> See *ibid*, p 157; also "Neighbors," *Survey*, l (1923), 44.

<sup>1</sup> Mumford, "Who is Patrick Geddes?" *Survey*, *loc. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> Lewis Mumford, "Who is Patrick Geddes?" *Survey*, *loc. cit.*

to which Geddes gave consistent attention—education. Perhaps, indeed, this diffusion of thought has been responsible for the slowness of the recognition of Geddes; his books are not convenient texts for restricted fields. Yet the admiration of his associates and disciples attests to the merit of his work—of associates such as Elisée Reclus, Gilbert Slater, Victor Branford, J. A. Hobson, and William James;<sup>3</sup> of disciples—Sir J. Arthur Thomson and Lewis Mumford. The tributes written at the time of his death came chiefly from Scotland and England, but there was praise from America as well, and from India and Palestine. And in the recent campaign to keep his sociological laboratory open, the committee included Shaw, Bergson, and Sir Raymond Unwin.<sup>4</sup>

Patrick Geddes drew from many sources for the ideas which he promulgated and which he exemplified in his activities, he achieves a synthesis of much of the most significant Victorian thought—the evolutionary theories sponsored by Darwin and Huxley, the sociology of Comte and Le Play; the vitalism of Bergson; ideas upon education, economics, art, city-planning. Those ideas formed the web of his mind; they gave new color and emphasis to one another. Among them John Ruskin's ideas furnished important strands and many parts of the pattern.

It is to Geddes himself that one turns for preliminary understanding of his debt to Ruskin. A glance through the titles of his early books and articles would alone furnish a clue. Before he wrote his brochure, *John Ruskin, Economist*,<sup>5</sup> the young biologist had already written for the Royal Society of Edinburgh two essays on economics—"On the Classification of Statistics and Its Results,"<sup>6</sup> and "An Analysis of the Principles of Economics."<sup>7</sup> Shortly afterward he lectured "On the Conditions of Progress of the Capitalist and of the Labourer."<sup>8</sup> In 1888 the young biologist wrote on the fine arts, *Every Man His Own Art Critic*,<sup>9</sup> and in the following year published again an essay on Ruskin, "Political Economy and Fine Art."<sup>1</sup> Ten years later he considered his *John Ruskin Economist* valuable enough to allow it to be reprinted without significant revision.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>3</sup> P. L. Boardman, *Esquisse de l'oeuvre educatrice de Patrick Geddes* pp. 54, 156

<sup>4</sup> Lewis Mumford, 'Memorial to a Great Town Planner,' *American City*, 11 (1936) p. 101

<sup>5</sup> *John Ruskin, Economist* (Edinburgh, 1884)

<sup>6</sup> *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Edinburgh*, 11 (1882), 295-322

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 11 (1884), 942-980

<sup>8</sup> In *The Claims of Labour*, ed. James Oliphant (Edinburgh, 1886)

<sup>9</sup> *Every Man His Own Art Critic*, Glasgow Exhibition, 1888 (Edinburgh, 1888)

<sup>1</sup> *The Scottish Art Review*, 11 (1889), 13 f

<sup>2</sup> *International Monthly*, 1 (1900), 280-308

Geddes would not allow himself to be pigeon-holed:

People ask me, am I a Darwinian or a Spencerian, a Ruskinian, or a Carlylean, an Aristotelian or a Platonist? [And so on through a list of a dozen more labels.] And my answer is emphatically: "Yes, of course!" Every man who really and fairly thinks over all these doctrines must go so far with them, and see some truth in each <sup>3</sup>

Elsewhere, however, he more definitely expresses the meaning of Ruskin to him and his sociology.

If you want immediate origins of our movement, you may say that the yeavestive and generative spirit of Ruskin—with his critique of paleo technic industry and its economists—had much to do with it.<sup>4</sup> Then came Morris; then Ebenezer Howard and Unwin and the rest of us with Eutopia as garden city <sup>5</sup>

And when one turns to the text of the writings of Geddes, one finds first the frequent quotations which show how regularly Ruskin comes to his mind. Most significantly, Geddes cites Ruskin in explanation of some of the most vital phases of his own work. It is finally in such correspondence that the illustration of the debt of Geddes to Ruskin's social criticism lies.

Geddes aligns himself with many of the Mid-Victorians and with many of his contemporaries in his constant attack upon the industrial age; the views the young Geddes adopted came from many sources. Yet since much of Geddes's writing was induced by his opposition to Victorian ideals, to national expansion careless of cultural values, to mechanistic approaches to human problems, one needs to note his early and continued advocacy of Ruskin's attitudes. Particularly his essay *John Ruskin, Economist* should be observed. In it Geddes warmly approves the humanistic, or "biotechnic" point of view—the application of the standard of vital value. He had already illustrated that point of view in his papers before the Royal Society of Edinburgh; he was to exemplify it throughout his long series of publications, to his last book, *Life Principles of Biology*, in 1931. For his argument against materialism Geddes made use of materials with which Ruskin was unfamiliar, sometimes

<sup>3</sup> Quoted by Amelia Defries, *The Interpreter Geddes* (London, 1927), p. 167

<sup>4</sup> *Paleotechnic*, like *paleolithic*, refers to a primitive, barbarous age—the age of wasteful and ugly industry

<sup>5</sup> Quoted by Defries, *The Interpreter Geddes*, p. 235. Geddes intends the pun in the word *Eutopia*.

obstinately unfamiliar—the evolutionary thought of Lamarck and Darwin, the sociological studies undertaken by Comte and Le Play. But many of Geddes's basic views of society too closely parallel Ruskin's to be chance correspondences. As Geddes tests Victorian society by the standard of vital value, his emphasis upon *aesthesis* is distinctively Ruskinian—upon beauty in environment, upon quality in production, and upon creative satisfaction in work. One can observe how Geddes as biologist and as sociologist adds to ideas which were essentially Ruskin's.

As he describes Victorian environment, Geddes remembers Ruskin. Ruskin, he says, 'suffers from acute hyperaesthesia,' he "cannot be case-hardened to the sights and sounds and smells of mechanical civilisation." Again, though Ruskin "has been laughed at like the enraged musician in Hogarth's drawings, may we not for a while stand quiet to hear him play? What worker is so wholly dulled in vision as never to suffer from the noise and darkness of the towns? In Ruskin our sadness over the eclipse of beauty was deepened to maddening sorrow."<sup>6</sup>

In Geddes's writings description is more limited than in Ruskin's, but the attitudes of the two men are the same. *The Coming Polity*, on which Geddes collaborated with Victor Branford, affords this summary: "First came the Factory Age which moulded the towns into monotonous dreariness of mean streets, and next the Railway Age which distorted them into shapeless repulsive forms, disfiguring the countryside by luxuriant growth of monstrous tentacles."<sup>7</sup> Geddes confines his remarks chiefly to the towns, and his work on housing and town planning became the major activity of the second half of his life. Always, however, he considers the town in relation to its region, and deplores, like Ruskin, the draining of the produce and talent of the countryside and the provinces into the cities, into the capital cities especially, which gave little in return and were themselves contemptible. "What has any modern industrial city," Geddes writes, "however stupendous its wealth—on paper—to show save a sorry aggregate of ill-constructed houses?"<sup>8</sup> Many of his details he draws from London and Edinburgh. In London "the City" is "but an exaggeration of the old Ghetto."<sup>9</sup> The buildings of commerce and finance dwarf the churches;

<sup>6</sup> "John Ruskin, as Economist," *International Monthly*, 1 (1900), 293. This is a republication, without significant change, of the essay of 1884.

<sup>7</sup> Victor Branford and Patrick Geddes, *The Coming Polity* (London, 1919), p. 167.

<sup>8</sup> "John Ruskin, as Economist," *International Monthly*, 1 (1900), 304.

<sup>9</sup> *Cities in Evolution* (London 1915), p. 117.

there is no spot left from which to see Westminster at its best.<sup>1</sup> Slums are everywhere: "Slum, Semi-Slum, Super-Slum—the end of the evolution of cities. Here are the real wages which capitalist and laborer alike have earned." In spite of architectural qualities, even Charlotte Square in Edinburgh is a super-slum: "Skimpy back yards, spoiled garden spaces, mews—formerly disease breeders."<sup>2</sup> And more than one-half of the Scottish people live in one and two-room tenements. "The poor quarter" and "the industrial quarters" cover three-fourths of the area of the industrial towns.<sup>3</sup> Geddes is more practical than Ruskin, and more discreet. In recommendations for the city of Dunfermline, he speaks thus of factories: "My treatment of the mills below the abbey and palace will sufficiently show that, so far from having any objection to industrial buildings, I accept and even welcome their presence, and only press their employment in ways consistent with the ordinary claims of hygiene and public beauty" (Yet directly afterward Geddes is careful to point out "the danger of an industrial huddle of factories and buildings in the beautiful valley to the south")<sup>4</sup> Geddes praises Durham as "a veritable beauty-spot of the coal-age, a paragon of the paleotechnic order." Aware of paleotechnic virtues, Geddes writes his *Cities in Evolution* to demonstrate how limited in extent and possibility such virtues are, and to suggest immediate and gradual improvements.

Geddes calls upon science to help his analysis. "In matters civic," he says, "as in simpler fields of science, it is from facts surveyed and interpreted that we gain our general ideas of the direction of Evolution, and even see how to further this, since from the best growths selected we may rear yet better ones"<sup>5</sup> Thus, though Geddes like Ruskin points out the comfort and beauty of medieval cities (Salisbury, for example, and Old Edinburgh), Geddes does more—he recounts the deterioration of the old cities, the gradual degradation of housing, particularly in the industrial period. Geddes traces also the growth of new "combinations," clusters of cities in Lancashire and across the south of Scotland. From such a background he can predict some of the dangers of the future—to the supply of water and food, to the countryside not yet covered; and he can emphasize the need of city planning and the means to it. The artist and the evolutionist both look at the modern

<sup>1</sup> Branford and Geddes, *The Coming Polity*, p. 272

<sup>2</sup> *Cities in Evolution*, pp. 118, 128

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 111, 134

<sup>4</sup> *City Development* (Edinburgh, 1904), pp. 90, 95

<sup>5</sup> *Cities in Evolution*, p. vi

city; Geddes uses Ruskin's term for it: Kakatopia, the evil place, the place of ugliness and disease. Ruskin attacks what he sees; Geddes explains historically and makes plans for the future.

Not only through general environment, but also through the labor it required, Victorian industry had its effect upon men. Rough work, mechanical work, useless work—all these are essentials of Victorian industry, and all cause the deterioration of the worker. The insistence of Ruskin "on the primary duty of regulating expenditure with reference to the effect on the mind and body of the labourer," Geddes points out in 1884. "Such teaching," he declares, "surely equals in clear biological insight and in social wisdom anything in the entire literature of practical economics; since it clearly indicates the line of evolution toward the future city of healthy and happy artists, surrounded by imperishable treasure, from our modern city of weary and sickly drudges, immersed in germs and dust for their pains."<sup>6</sup> Thirty years later, Geddes is still calling attention to the problem Ruskin raised: "One of the worst limitations of the middle-class and upper-class points of view is . . . not seeing how widely different are the forms of labour—not merely in products and various rates of money wages; . . . beyond all these, their effects."<sup>7</sup>

Partly through their environment, partly through their work, and partly through its production of wares for profit and not for use, Victorian industry has robbed the people of fullness of life. "For both [rich and poor]," Geddes writes, "life is equally blank at present; the capitalist in his big ugly house is no happier than the labourer in his little ugly one; if the one has more fatigue, the other has more worry."<sup>8</sup> He speaks of the new need for "change of air," and of the disadvantages of rapid travel. Like Ruskin, Geddes writes of the universal loss of taste, a concomitant of mass production—cheapness in dress, in houses, in amusement: "The taste of the European public is at present practically directed by women of the town," Ruskin writes;<sup>9</sup> and Geddes: "The crude luxury is excused, nay psychologically demanded, by the starvation of paleotechnic life in well-nigh every vital element of beauty and spirituality known and valued by humanity hitherto."<sup>1</sup> Both cite the

<sup>6</sup> John Ruskin, as *Economist*, *International Monthly*, i (1900), 304.

<sup>7</sup> *Cities in Evolution*, p. 61.

<sup>8</sup> "On the Conditions of Progress of the Capitalist and of the Labourer," *The Claims of Labour*, p. 107.

<sup>9</sup> *Fors*, ii (xxvii), 359.

<sup>1</sup> *Cities in Evolution*, p. 76.

tremendous increase in drunkenness. In one passage of an Indian town-planning report Geddes points out many phases of the deterioration of paleotechnic life:

For the prevalent disease of modern times, and of India perhaps in particular, is not any one of the organic calamities, such as plague, malaria, etc., of recent sweeping visitations. . . . The essential evil lies in that lowering of nervous resistance and psychic vigour,—in short 'neurasthenia'—which leaves people a too easy prey to these specific diseases. It is the now common urban prevalence of depressed physical tone, and of lessened mental and moral energy together. Of these evils the symptoms are only too manifest in the modern city. Hence its diminished economic energy and efficiency. Hence also its lessened material constructiveness, with lowering and almost cessation of art-interest, and of art-production, together. The modern city, despite its apparent bustle of business and buzz of machinery, is thus sick, sick at heart. With its emotional life fading to apathy, religion loses its vital energy, and survives mainly as routine. With depressed interest in life and its higher issues intellect is dulled. . . . Imagination and the arts die down together; or are replaced by crude stimulants, dull comforts, or transient luxuries, in lower, middle and upper classes, respectively, or more or less together.<sup>2</sup>

Geddes accepted Ruskin's view of the results of Victorian industry, and tested those results by Ruskin's standard of vital value; clearer evidence of Geddes's indebtedness lies in his detailing of the ugliness of the Victorian environment, in his demand for quality in production, and in his stress upon the mechanical monotony of factory work. Furthermore, Geddes echoed many of Ruskin's specific indictments (so many that only his thorough absorption of Ruskin's attitudes can explain the correspondence). There is, however, this significant difference between the writings of the two men: One of Ruskin's chief powers is in attack, in the deep-etched portrayal of evils and in the acid intensity of many of his sentences. Geddes expresses his views more flatly. If Geddes gains a hearing, he will not offend with extravagance; though, on the other hand, he cannot excoriate or inspire. Geddes, moreover, fits his details into a clearer pattern than Ruskin's, avoiding the incoherence which made many of Ruskin's opinions seem adventitious and irrelevant. Thus the term that Geddes applies to the age, *paleotechnic*, relates it to the evolving technics of the human race, suggesting the Old Stone Age, its crudity and barbarism. As the neolithic age suc-

<sup>2</sup> *Town-Planning in Patiala State and City* (Lucknow, 1922), p. 23.



ceeded the paleolithic, so, Geddes predicts, will a *neotechnic* age succeed Victorian industrialism.<sup>3</sup> Geddes saw the new age already appearing in Scandinavia (age of electricity, generated by water-power; of coöperation; of culture; the skill of the neotechnic order being "directed by life toward life, and for life"). To such a society the text "Whatsoever a man soweth—" will be preached as a blessing; to the *paleotechts* it is preached as a curse.<sup>4</sup> Geddes by his new terms and by his more organic view of civilization adds fresh clarity to the Ruskinian ideas about the industrial age.

In the special field of art Geddes can add much less to Ruskin's criticism. That as a young scientist he should venture into art-criticism is indicative chiefly of one thing—the inspiration of the work he was simultaneously doing on Ruskin.<sup>5</sup> His criticism is itself negligible, but it suggests the basis of the continuing stress Geddes put upon the fine arts in his other writing. The degradation of nineteenth-century art—which drew Ruskin more and more toward social criticism from the time of the *Stones of Venice*—Geddes also uses as an illustration of the deterioration of culture. He cites details from Ruskin—the billboards as "well-nigh our only source of street effect;" like Ruskin he scorns the academicians: shows are held chiefly "for the benefit of the forty richest of artists."<sup>6</sup> Like Ruskin he finds architecture at its nadir, "vastness yet monotony of design, elaborate finish yet utter spiritlessness of detail."<sup>7</sup> It is, however, in his work on evolution, on economics, and on city-planning that Geddes's insistence upon beauty, upon *aesthesis*, becomes notable. He asks:

Why should there be among living creatures such a practical omnipresence of pleasing lines and colours? Must not part of the answer be that natural creatures are [results of] harmonious metabolism and rhythmic orderly growth? Perfectly adaptive architecture from which all the useless has been eliminated, the organised ripple-marks of orderly regulated growth, the colour-expressions of successfully rhythmic metabolism from which everything disorderly has been sifted out, *ought* to be beautiful.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *Cities in Evolution*, pp. 10–28.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 71, 75.

<sup>5</sup> 1887: "Every Man His Own Art Critic at the Manchester Exhibition;" *John Ruskin, Economist* (reprint). 1888: *Every Man His Own Art Critic* (Glasgow exhibition). 1889: "Political Economy and Fine Art," *The Scottish Art Review*, ii, 13; chiefly about Ruskin.

<sup>6</sup> "Political Economy and Fine Art," *The Scottish Art Review*, ii, 13.

<sup>7</sup> *Industrial Exhibitions and Modern Progress* (Edinburgh, 1887), p. 46.

<sup>8</sup> Sir J. Arthur Thomson and Patrick Geddes, *Life: Outlines of General Biology*, 2 vols. (London, 1931), i, 37.

In this comment Geddes approaches from the standpoint of a biologist Ruskin's doctrine of "specific beauty." The optimism Geddes displays as he talks of evolution ("It is not merely that all things flow; it is that life flows uphill")<sup>9</sup> is based partly on his belief in the increasing beauty of forms. And believing that both vitalistic and mechanistic interpretations of evolution are essential, for "fundamental though environment is, the progress of evolution is ever marked by active adaptation,"<sup>1</sup> Geddes comes to assert the great importance of the artist in the evolution of man. "The high and intensely positive pleasure-consciousness of the poets—surely the most vitally developed of our species, and most anticipatory of all—is not to be ignored by science, the more since what makes all the fine arts fine is their poetic quality, of which science and philosophy at their fullest, share something too"<sup>2</sup> Art—pictorial, architectural, poetic—is not to be regarded casually, as a philanthropic diversion of the rich; the sensitiveness of the artist is vital to the evolving consciousness of man. Though "beauty is a tonic, potent toward health,"<sup>3</sup> art is more than a restorative; it is a stimulant—in, for example, presenting ideals which form character. How little beauty, how limited artistic stimulus Geddes, in common with Ruskin, thought "paleotechnic" life possessed, has already been detailed. In his city planning projects—in Dunfermline, in Indore and Patiala, in Jerusalem—Geddes strove to overcome ugliness as well as squalor and crowding; and beauty he prophesied in the "neotechnic" age to come.

Blended with their adverse criticism of the Industrial Age, the positive beliefs of Ruskin and Geddes show clear, those beliefs which underlie the changes they advocate. In applying those beliefs, in motivating the changes, at times they work on similar projects, notably a reform of education. In certain of his reforms and constructive theories Geddes calls attention to anticipations in Ruskin, sometimes casually to defend Ruskin's practicality, as when Geddes points out Ruskin's clear-sightedness in urging state control of marriage; sometimes more emphatically, as in his reference to the slum-improvement Ruskin initiated in London. The "Tenement House Exhibit now being prepared in New York for Paris [1900] must also go straight back for its impetus to Ruskin's initial investment with Miss Octavia Hill."<sup>4</sup> Geddes ac-

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 1215.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 1211.

<sup>4</sup> "John Ruskin, as Economist," *International Monthly*, 1 (1900), 304.

complished much in slum-clearance in Edinburgh. And Ruskin's attempt to revive handicrafts in St. George's Guild is followed by Geddes in his Dunfermline report. Except for such details and for educational methods, Ruskin's work in establishing St. George's Guild, important as it was in serving to exemplify his ideas, had few suggestions for Geddes's practice. The feudalistic system of land-holding, the banishment of steam-machinery—these favorite concerns of Ruskin's seemed to Geddes to be out of place in an evolving industrial world. Geddes looks forward in the town-planning which became his chief interest in the first decade of the twentieth century.

In his reports—Dunfermline, the cities of India, Jerusalem—one finds again his interest in art as well as in sanitation. Beauty and efficiency go together. "The cogent lesson for our own times is that Art and Industry, Education and Health, Morals and Business, so generally severed in the passing age, must henceforth advance in unison."<sup>5</sup> Geddes contrasts the "later town-planning movement" with the earlier, in which grandiose conceptions overruled practical considerations; the rising rents after the slum-clearance in Paris in the middle of the nineteenth century were, he believes, an important cause of the Commune. The later movement, in which he himself played a considerable part, had two characteristics. First, it maintained "a larger view both of social and of individual life than as limited by its mechanical and monetary interests—especially as exaggerated, to the depression of others, by the recent phases of Western Civilization, its 'machine-economy' and 'price economy.' . . . It insists upon providing more and more fully for the completest possible improvement of the whole life-conditions of the community and its members." Secondly, the later town-planning movement "increasingly bases this more comprehensive procedure upon a correspondingly full and varied 'Survey.'"<sup>6</sup> In the town-planning field Geddes reached high esteem, as his many appointments testify. He kept ideals and practice before him at the same time. And again Geddes makes use of details and ideas from John Ruskin.

## VII

JOHN A. HOBSON had already gained distinction as an economist, a distinction somewhat grudgingly acknowledged by the orthodox, when he was led by chance to make a close study of Ruskin. Ruskin was not to him, as to Morris and to Geddes, an initial stimulus; though a contem-

<sup>5</sup> Branford and Geddes, *The Coming Polity*, p. xi.

<sup>6</sup> *Pastala*, p. 21.

porary of Geddes, he came to Ruskin later, in the mid-nineties. Yet even more clearly than Geddes, he adopted certain fundamentals of Ruskin's social criticism; and they in turn became central to his own economic teaching.

Like Morris, like Geddes, Hobson makes frequent acknowledgement of his indebtedness, which like theirs has been both general and detailed. Specific references throughout his major works are the tributes of a disciple to a master. Hobson's praise is generous, but it is not, from the first, indiscriminate. As Hobson has written, widely and variously, on economics, on politics, and in broader social criticism, adding often a volume a year, his advocacy of Ruskin's doctrines has been paralleled by continuing appraisal of them *John Ruskin, Social Reformer*, the book which in 1898 summarized Hobson's study of Ruskin, remains the fullest and most authoritative treatment of its topic. Subsequent articles, notably the one written for the Ruskin Centenary,<sup>7</sup> reveal modifications in Hobson's criticism of Ruskin; but they reveal also the unmodified acceptance by Hobson of many of Ruskin's principles. In his most recent book, *Confessions of an Economic Heretic*, Hobson speaks once more of the work he did on Ruskin in the nineties, declaring: "From him I drew the basic thought for my subsequent economic writings."<sup>8</sup>

Early and late, many of Hobson's interests have lain outside Ruskin's concerns. And both politically and economically Hobson's disagreements with Ruskin have been important in his thought and writing. Yet in the fundamental interest of his life, in his economics, in his criticism of the industrial society for which his economics is partly an explanation and against which partly a protest, and in his theories of social reform, Hobson has built with and often upon the ideas of Ruskin.

Among these ideas Ruskin's aesthetic judgments upon contemporary society are relatively unimportant; but Ruskin's analysis of work and his demand for qualitative judgment of production reappear—modified of course and much amplified—in Hobson.

Hobson predicts, in *John Ruskin, Social Reformer*, that Ruskin's "work will hereafter be recognized as the first serious attempt in England to establish a scientific basis of economic study from the social standpoint."<sup>9</sup> But Ruskin does not, he declares, construct a fully de-

<sup>7</sup> "Ruskin as Political Economist," *Ruskin the Prophet*, ed J H Whitehouse, pp. 83 ff

<sup>8</sup> *Confessions of an Economic Heretic*, p. 42.

<sup>9</sup> *John Ruskin*, p. 120.

veloped system. On the one hand, Ruskin has made a notable analysis of *value*. "Intrinsic value" is the capacity "to satisfy a good human want";<sup>1</sup> "effectual value" depends upon the ability of the consumer to utilize the intrinsic qualities of goods. An implicit corollary is a third test of wealth, the quantity of goods the consumer can use.<sup>2</sup> These distinctions, achieved in *Munera Pulveris*, were, however, but one of the announced aims of the book.<sup>3</sup> There Hobson discovers "laid down with admirable succinctness the fundamental antithesis between the cost of labor which goes into making 'goods,' and the utility or enjoyment to be got out of them."<sup>4</sup> But Ruskin ignores one side of the problem, consideration of *cost* as balanced against *value*. To the various aspects of cost—intrinsic nature of the work in relation to the capacity of the worker and the distribution of labor—Ruskin was, Hobson says, "fully alive." "But neither in 'Munera Pulveris' nor elsewhere has he gathered them together so as to confront them with his analysis of value or utility."<sup>5</sup> Ruskin's analysis was therefore incomplete in a material respect.

The doctrines Hobson praises in Ruskin are incorporated in his own theories; the qualifications Hobson has made, even in considering the scope of political economy, are made again as he attacks the classicists and builds his own system. With much fuller knowledge than Ruskin, Hobson provides a more detailed refutation; and his construction has a balance that Ruskin lacks. In addition, Hobson devotes whole volumes and constant attention to narrowly economic questions which Ruskin barely touches upon or of which he is entirely unaware.

Hobson's major heresy remains nevertheless his continuation of Ruskin's assault upon classical political economy and his adoption and sponsorship, on the other hand, of Ruskin's definitions of *wealth* and *value*. Adumbrated in *John Ruskin, Social Reformer*, this heresy was published as early as 1902 in *The Social Problem*.<sup>6</sup> For what is probably Hobson's best-known and most influential book, *Work and Wealth* (1914),<sup>7</sup> it furnishes the central theme, a theme repeated with

<sup>1</sup> Hobson's paraphrase, *ibid.*, p. 108.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 109 f.

<sup>3</sup> *Munera Pulveris* (xvii), p. 152: "The essential work of the political economist is to determine what are in reality useful or life-giving things, and by what degrees and kinds of labor they are attainable and distributable."

<sup>4</sup> Hobson, *John Ruskin*, p. 106.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 113.

<sup>6</sup> *The Social Problem* (London, 1902).

<sup>7</sup> *Work and Wealth* (New York, 1914).

many variations in two of Hobson's most notable succeeding volumes, *Free-Thought in the Social Sciences* (1926)<sup>8</sup> and *Wealth and Life* (1929, 1930)<sup>9</sup> It is this heresy which furnishes Hobson with the term "welfare economics," a term generally adopted by both adherents and critics of his theories. Promulgation of this heresy, or, in other words, "the humanization of economic thinking," Hobson declares to be his "primary intellectual task"<sup>1</sup>

To the simplified systems of other economists Hobson opposes his welfare economics Proceeding from Ruskin's definitions of *wealth*, *value*, and *cost*, Hobson erects a balanced theory, elaborated most fully in his *Work and Wealth* He attempts "a human valuation of industry [which] will give equal attention to Production and Consumption, will express Cost and Utility in terms of human effort and satisfaction, and will substitute for the monetary standard of wealth a standard of well-being" Such an attempt is not new, Hobson declares, for Ruskin had embarked upon it Ruskin had "seized with incomparable force of vision the cardinal truth of human economics, *viz.*, that every piece of concrete wealth must be valued in terms of the vital costs of its production and the vital uses of its consumption, and his most effective assault upon current economic theory was based upon its complete inadequacy to afford such information" Yet Ruskin had failed to apply this double analysis he had slighted the "costs" as he worked with "utility" Hobson announces thereupon that the purpose of his book "is in fact to perform the task indicated by Ruskin, *viz.* to apply to industry the vital standard of valuation, or at any rate to improve the instruments of vital survey." Hobson takes "organic welfare" for his standard, "regarding the productive effort which goes into any work of production and the satisfaction which proceeds from the consumption of any product, not as a separate cost and a separate utility, but in their total bearing upon the life of the producer or consumer" Though he finds defects in the term *organic*, it comes closest to his meaning "What is necessary," he says, "is that some term should be used to assist the mind in realising clearly that all life proceeds by the cooperation of units working, not each for its separate self, but for a whole, and attaining their separate well-being in the proper functioning of that whole." Moreover, Hobson

<sup>8</sup> *Free-Thought in the Social Sciences* (New York, 1926)

<sup>9</sup> *Wealth and Life* (London, 1930) The American edition of the preceding year has what is probably the less familiar title *Economics and Ethics* (New York, 1929).

<sup>1</sup> *Confessions of an Economic Heretic*, p. 58

means to consider economic processes "not only in their bearing upon individual lives, but also in their bearing upon the welfare of society."<sup>2</sup>

Here are the lines of Hobson's investigation, directly founded upon *Munera Pulveris*:

In order to express business 'costs' in terms of human cost, we require to know three things:

1. The quality and kind of various human efforts involved in the business 'cost.'

2. The capacities of the human beings who give out these efforts.

3. The distribution of the effort among those who give it out.

Corresponding strictly to this analysis of 'costs' of Production will be the analysis of 'utility' of Consumption. There we shall want to know:

1. The quality and kind of the satisfaction or utility yielded by the 'economic utility' that is sold to consumers.

2. The capacities of consumers who get this 'economic utility.'

3. The distribution of the economic utility among the consuming public.<sup>3</sup>

Hobson in this summary outlines the analysis which follows in his book. First he considers, much more fully than Ruskin, "The Human Costs of Labor," though here also he often follows Ruskin's clues. Thus Hobson emphasizes the costs of mechanical work, contrasting it with the creative. "As the artist presents the supreme example of creative work, with a minimum of human costs and a maximum of human utility, so the machine-tender presents the supreme example of imitative work, with a maximum of human costs and a minimum of human utility." Hobson points out the "burden of injurious fatigue which results from muscular or nervous overstrain, and from the other physical and moral injuries which are the natural accompaniments of this overstrain." He details also the risks, of accident and disease, in industry. Yet in spite of these tremendous human costs connected with it, he declares the charge against machinery to have been frequently overstated.<sup>4</sup> He cannot agree with those who find (as Morris did, and Ruskin before him) ideal conditions of labor in the Middle Ages. Hobson's realistic point of view is worth detailing at length:

To those who brood upon these visions of the past, our modern industrial development has often seemed a crude substitution of quantity of goods for quality, the character of labor deteriorating in the process. With the element of truth in such a judgment is mingled much falsehood. There has

<sup>2</sup> *Work and Wealth*, pp. 9 ff.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 62, 63, 72.

never been an age or a country where the great bulk of labor was not toilsome, painful, monotonous, and uninteresting, often degrading in its conditions. Bad as things are, when regarded from the standpoint of a human ideal, they are better for the majority of workers in this and in other advanced industrial countries than ever in the past, so far as we can reconstruct and understand that past. Machinery has rendered a great human service by taking over large masses of heavy, dull, and degrading work. When fully developed and harnessed to the social service of man, it should prove to be the great liberator of his free productive tastes and faculties, performing for him the routine processes of industry so that he may have time and energy to devote himself to activities more interesting and varied.<sup>5</sup>

Hobson goes on to consider the distribution of human costs in labor, discussing the work of women and children and the various costs of various work for men. But like Ruskin Hobson devotes most of his analysis to the utilities of consumption, applying first the vital standard to various commodities and distinguishing between "wealth" and "illth."<sup>6</sup> Again Hobson's analysis is much fuller than Ruskin's, as he considers "Class Standards of Consumption" and, more especially, "The Human Law of Distribution."<sup>7</sup>

It is difficult to distinguish at times between Hobson's description and his recommendations, between economic science and economic art. (For that shifting of focus he has had, of course, frequent precedent in economic writing.) Thus toward the end of *Work and Wealth* Hobson lays the foundations for reforms he advocates, dividing productive activities into Art and Routine,<sup>8</sup> and pointing the way to social progress:

If, then, we are to secure an economy of social progress in which relatively less importance is to be given to those industries which are less humanly desirable, alike in the work they involve and in the satisfaction their products yield, we must have a society which becomes increasingly qualitative in its tastes and interest and in its human constitution. A larger proportion of its real income must take shape in non-material goods, or in material goods which depend more for the satisfaction they yield upon their quality. In a word, there must be a tendency to keep life simple in regard to material consumption.<sup>9</sup>

Hobson, like Morris and Geddes, disagrees with Ruskin upon gov-

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 106 ff

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 159 ff

<sup>8</sup> *Work and Wealth*, p. 304

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 315 f



ernment. It is interesting to notice, however, that Hobson's semi-socialism grows directly from his desire to replace much quantitative, routine industry with qualitative, artistic craftsmanship. Though Hobson opposes State Socialism, his economic proposals are partially, though by no means completely, socialistic. A planned economy is needed; provision for that is the chief task of government.<sup>1</sup> Such planning demands, Hobson declares, "liquidation of private profiteering capitalism in many important branches of production, transport, commerce, and finance." Key industries should be socialized, the standardized, mechanical industries; but the higher kinds of work, these set a limit to Socialism. "Individuality in consumption requires some corresponding individuality in production." A balance is needed between individual and routine production, a balance based upon the likenesses and differences of men.<sup>2</sup> Here, finally, is Hobson's conception of an economic democracy: "I envisage an economic democracy in which the socialization of standardized and key industries, voluntary co-operative enterprise, and private business enterprise will perform different sorts of productive work, while the consumers' final interests and liberties must be secured through the ordinary forms of popular local elections, supplemented by participation in conciliation and arbitration boards dealing with specific industrial problems."<sup>3</sup> In other words, the state will exert firm authority over the enterprises left to private business. The excess profits of skilled industries could, moreover, be taxed.<sup>4</sup>

Hobson's ideas of political and economic reform are multifarious. Many of them recall Ruskin. Yet the relationship need not be stressed. The political method Hobson urges is, furthermore, directly opposed to Ruskin's; and the close attention to social incentives and the concern with internationalism are Hobson's alone. But the economic theory which lies behind Hobson's ideas of reform gives them unity, the economic theory behind them and the ideals to which the reforms point. And both of these, it need hardly be repeated, are in significant ways accepted from Ruskin. "It is to improved quality and character of consumption," Hobson says, "that we can alone look for a guarantee of social progress."<sup>5</sup> And again, "All progress, from primitive savagedom to modern civilization, will then appear as consisting in the progressive

<sup>1</sup> *Poverty and Plenty, the Ethics of Income* (London, 1931), pp. 87 f.

<sup>2</sup> *Confessions*, pp. 139, 144, 171 f., 197, 198; see also *Work and Wealth*, pp. 293, 304 ff.; and *Wealth and Life*, p. xxx.

<sup>3</sup> *Confessions*, pp. 179 f.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 199.

<sup>5</sup> *The Evolution of Modern Capitalism* (London and New York, 1926), p. 424.

socialism of the lower functions, the stoppage of lower forms of competition, and of the education of the more brutal qualities, in order that a larger and larger proportion of individual activity may be engaged in the exercise of higher functions, the practice of competition upon higher planes, and the education of higher forms of fitness." <sup>6</sup> Life itself must become qualitative, Hobson declares, quoting Geddes in support.<sup>7</sup> He might have added, as frequently he did, "There is no wealth but Life."

### VIII

NONE of these social critics—Morris, Geddes, Hobson—can be called a Ruskinian, if the term denotes a mere follower. They are individual in the phases of Ruskin's social criticism which they select for their own attention, and consequently in the ideas of Ruskin which they promulgate; they are individual in what they renounce.

Yet common to the thought of all three men are their humanistic criticism of contemporary society and the humanistic aims they advance for reform. In the nature of this criticism and of these aims, as in many of the details of both, they work, as all of them declare, with Ruskin's standards of vital value. They oppose the mechanism and materialism of the current industrial society with Ruskin's "organic" ideal. They point to results of production for profit and demand concern for consumption. Vital, qualitative values in consumption—they sponsor these; and they require an accounting of vital costs. Hobson is less extreme than Morris as he considers the effects of mechanized industry upon labor, and he is less optimistic than Geddes of imminent improvement; yet Hobson as well as the others hopes for extension of creative work. And Hobson, like Morris and Geddes, gives close attention to qualities of products. He does not, however, afford, as they do, detailed description of the effects of contemporary civilization upon the environment and the lives of men. With Ruskin Hobson aims at a qualitative ideal of life; Geddes and Morris give more attention than he to the aesthetic poverty of their age, and especially to the ugliness of "paleotechnic" cities and to the barren, ugly lives of the citizens.

There are many and essential points of likeness among the three; there is much divergence also, in their interests and their attitudes, and in their use of Ruskin. Morris, for example, continues Ruskin's theoriz-

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 420.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 433.

ing in sociological aesthetics. And in his Utopia he interweaves medievalism and his opposition to contemporary materialism with Marxian Socialism. Geddes examines the role of *aesthesis* in evolution, and finds in the neglect of it one of many instances of the unduly mechanical views and techniques of science. Into city-planning he carries Ruskinian ideals of beauty and humanity. Hobson, finally, makes use chiefly of Ruskin's economics. But as he propounds his semi-socialism, Hobson maintains his interest in qualitative consumption and in human costs—or, in other word, in vital *wealth*.

Into many fields, therefore, these three critics have carried Ruskin's aesthetic judgments of Victorian life—work and environment—and the social theories he based upon those judgments. To separate one interest of Ruskin's from the others—government, education, economics—is of course to do some violence to the reticulation of his thought, to that "organic" approach to human experience which Hobson praises in him. Yet only so can the acceptance of Ruskin's ideas be clearly illustrated.

It must be remarked that the social ideas of Ruskin are still current, still significant. Morris's social criticism has been reviewed frequently in the last few years. His humanistic Communism is considered an antidote to Marxian materialism by some writers who have little praise for the Soviet. Geddes wrote into the fourth decade of the present century, carrying into contemporary thought the standards and ideals he had accepted fifty years before; and through Lewis Mumford his humanism, as well as his study of city-planning and techniques, is gaining a greater currency than it ever had while he lived.<sup>8</sup> The reviews of Hobson's recent autobiography are not mere tributes to a venerable figure of the past, for Hobson's ideas continue to be praised or attacked as noteworthy contemporary social criticism.

If for no other reason than this—that his social criticism has long maintained its vitality and its pertinence—Ruskin's thought cannot be dismissed as only the imaginative maundering of a man of letters. Ruskin was extravagant often, and often more dogmatic than reasonable; but as he turned his attention from art to society he saw clearly what other men had not seen, and he established a point of view and a group of doctrines which later social critics have continued to hold.

<sup>8</sup> Mumford has remarked upon the identity of the fundamental social doctrines of Ruskin, Geddes, and himself: "As a social scientist, Ruskin dealt in realities, the realities of energy, the realities of cultural wealth, and not in pecuniary abstractions: he thus anticipates Geddes and Ostwald here, and his doctrine, that there is no wealth but life, is the foundation of that biotechnics which I learned from Geddes." (Unpublished letter, dated July 18, 1936, from Lewis Mumford.)

But this is true also: though Ruskin's ideas have reappeared in subsequent criticism, they retain unique value in their original context. For they are embodied in a literary form, itself as many-sided and organic as his interpretation of life.



# William Morris and the Poetry of Escape

By OSCAR MAURER, JR.

## I

THE publication of *The Earthly Paradise* in 1868-1870 first brought into sharp focus a problem with which English criticism in the decades following was to be seriously concerned. Is the poet justified in a frank refusal to treat contemporary themes and to criticize contemporary values? Should the poet attempt—directly or by implication—to present his solutions for contemporary social and religious difficulties? In short, is escapist poetry defensible? These are the questions which inspired the most significant themes in the critical reception of *The Earthly Paradise*.<sup>1</sup> Morris's most popular work<sup>2</sup> was praised or censured in the reviews largely as the critics' tastes led them to approve or disapprove of its "escapism."

At one extreme, Pater's enthusiastic support of the poetry of escape became identified with the doctrine of Art for Art's Sake, thence through Wilde to the affected medievalism of the aesthetes and to a later decadence. At the other extreme, the apologists for their own day condemned Morris for his failure to reflect the life and thought of an era of scientific and material progress. In his later career Morris himself followed neither of these extremes. He found in socialism the only valid means for healing the dangerous breach between escapist art on the one hand and Philistinism on the other. It was this dilemma, of which his own major literary work was a striking symbol, that convinced him of the necessity for social reform. But he never could bring himself to admit that contemporary scenes and subjects are fitting material for poetry.

<sup>1</sup> A check list of English and American reviews of *The Life and Death of Jason* and *The Earthly Paradise* is given below, pp. 273-276. *Jason* was originally intended by Morris for inclusion in *The Earthly Paradise*; its reception is therefore a legitimate part of this study.

<sup>2</sup> After 1870 Morris was identified, on the title-pages of his own books and by the public at large, as author of *The Earthly Paradise*.

The question of the poet's function as critic or interpreter of his own time recurs throughout the history of Victorian literary criticism. Arnold had raised it in the preface to his *Poems*, 1853, to explain the omission of *Empedocles*:

. . . it has not been excluded in deference to the opinion which many critics of the present day appear to entertain against subjects chosen from distant times and countries: against the choice, in short, of any subjects but modern ones.<sup>3</sup>

The true business of poets is not to praise their age, but to afford to the men who live in it the highest pleasure which they are capable of feeling.

If asked to afford this by means of subjects drawn from the age itself, they ask what special fitness the present age has for supplying them: they are told that it is an era of progress, an age commissioned to carry out the great ideas of industrial development and social amelioration.<sup>4</sup>

But Arnold was characteristically unimpressed by aims and ideals which he was later to dismiss, in "Sweetness and Light," as mere machinery. These are not the stuff of poetry. Poets need great actions:

. . . so far as the present age can supply such actions, they will gladly make use of them; but an age wanting in moral grandeur can with difficulty supply such, and an age of spiritual discomfort with difficulty be powerfully and delightfully affected by them.<sup>5</sup>

Toward the end of his life, Browning raised the same question in his *Parleyings*.<sup>6</sup> The poet who had dealt so largely with current questions of faith, and whose most explicit opinion of the poet's function had been expressed, significantly enough, in "How It Strikes a Contemporary," naturally held the opposite view from Arnold's. His lines are very probably aimed at Morris, whose romantic treatment of Greek myth in *Jason* and *The Earthly Paradise* was not wholly to Browning's liking.<sup>7</sup> The poets have lost sight of the goal:

<sup>3</sup> Matthew Arnold, *Poems* (London, 1853), p. ix.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xxviii.

<sup>5</sup> *Idem.* See a reply by an apologist for the age in *Fraser's*, Feb. 1854, pp. 140 ff.

<sup>6</sup> See W. C. DeVane, *Browning's Parleyings* (New Haven, 1927), pp. 233 ff.

<sup>7</sup> Though Browning wrote an appreciative letter to Morris on reading the first volume of *The Earthly Paradise* (see May Morris, *William Morris, Artist, Writer, Socialist* (Oxford, 1936), i, 641-642), his opinion changed when the later volumes appeared. In 1870 he wrote to Isa Blagden: "Morris is sweet, pictorial, clever always—but a weariness to me by this time." See T. L. Hood, *Letters of Robert Browning* (New Haven, 1933), p. 134.

Wherefore glozed  
 The poets—"Dream afresh old godlike shapes,  
 Recapture ancient fable that escapes,  
 Push back reality, repeople earth  
 With vanished falseness, recognize no worth  
 In fact new-born unless 'tis rendered back  
 Pallid by fancy, as the western rack  
 Of fading cloud bequeaths the lake some gleam  
 Of its gone glory!"

Let things be—not seem,  
 I counsel rather,—do, and nowise dream!  
 Earth's young significance is all to learn.<sup>8</sup>

The passage, with its buoyant assertion of faith in "some all-reconciling future," is Browning's answer to Morris's "Apology."<sup>9</sup>

It is indeed the prefatory "Apology" in *The Earthly Paradise* which is partly responsible for the critical examination of "escapism" that fills the reviews of the poem. The critics were faced with the necessity of commenting upon it. In the "Apology" and in the opening lines of the Prologue Morris proclaimed his intention to avoid the four problems most vitally important to his generation, problems which the interpreter of his age might normally be expected to attack. First and most immediate was the question of faith: the controversies of the decade,<sup>1</sup> marked by excited acrimony and bewilderment, were to find no place here:

Of Heaven or Hell I have no power to sing,  
 I cannot ease the burden of your fears,  
 Or make quick-coming death a little thing . . .

Secondly, the problem of "social amelioration" which Arnold had recognized as a Philistine hope, the problem of the condition of England<sup>2</sup> on which nearly every major figure of the period had spoken, would not be considered:

Dreamer of dreams, born out of my due time,  
 Why should I strive to set the crooked straight?

<sup>8</sup> R. Browning, *Parleyings*, "With Gerard de Lairese," lines 382-393.

<sup>9</sup> See also the "Epilogue" to *Pacchiarotto*, etc., 1876; here Browning answers the critics who demand sweetness, and in stanzas 3, 4, and 20 refers, I think, to *The Earthly Paradise*.

<sup>1</sup> *The Origin of Species* (1859); *Essays and Reviews* (1860); Colenso's *The Pentateuch . . . Critically Examined* (1862); Renan's *Vie de Jésus* (1863); Huxley's "The Physical Basis of Life" in the *Fortnightly* (1869).

<sup>2</sup> See a review of Helps's *Social Pressure* in *Macmillan's Magazine*, Jan. 1875, p. 185.



The third aspect of contemporary life from which Morris promised escape was the aspect of industrialism which offended him most deeply—the increasing physical ugliness of England:

Forget six counties overhung with smoke,  
Forget the snorting steam and piston stroke,  
Forget the spreading of the hideous town . . .

Finally *The Earthly Paradise* proposed to present characters untouched by the doubts and anxieties which the immediate and current questions, mentioned above, had aroused. Poetry of doubt, speculation, and psychological analysis had increased in volume and reputation with the emergence of Browning's first important literary fame<sup>3</sup> and with the publication of Arnold's *New Poems* in 1867. Morris rejected this tendency, and the critics found in his rejection another criterion in judging the poetry of escape:

So let me sing of names remembered,  
Because they, living not, can ne'er be dead . . .

In his idealized scene of the fourteenth century,

. . . in such times  
Shall dwell the hollow puppets of my rhymes.

Faced with this manifesto of "escapism," the reviewers concentrate largely upon these four aspects in the relationship between poetry and contemporary life and thought. The critical reception of *The Earthly Paradise*<sup>4</sup> thus deals with clear issues, and stands as a significant chapter in the history of Victorian criticism.

## II

IN WELCOMING *The Earthly Paradise* as an escape from contemporary problems of belief, John Morley was true to his positivistic rejection of all metaphysical speculation, particularly that which leads to negative or doubtful conclusions. He reviewed the first volume of the poem in the *Fortnightly*, of which he had recently become editor:

At a time when lovers of poetry are overwearied with excess of purely subjective verse, some of it deep and admirable and sincere, much of it

<sup>3</sup> *Dramatis Personae*, 1864, was the first of Browning's books that reached a second edition.

<sup>4</sup> On the reception of *Jason* see Mackail, *Life*, i, 189-191; and cf. K. Litzenberg, "William Morris and the Reviews," *Review of English Studies* (Oct., 1936), pp. 413 ff.

mere hollow echo and imitation, and most of it essentially sterile in its solutions, it is no small thing to possess such a poet as Mr. Morris. His mind seems to have travelled in paths remote from the turgid perplexities of a day of spiritual transition. Either the extraordinary directness and brightness of his temperament have made him unconscious of them, or else they have presented themselves to him for a space just long enough to reveal their own futility and flat unprofitableness, and then have vanished away, leaving him free to follow the lead of his own genius.<sup>5</sup>

The contrast between "subjectivity" and "objectivity" in poetry is a recurrent motif in reviews of Morris's work; it nearly always refers to Morris's refusal to deal with religious or philosophical matters. Morley continues.

We nowhere see in his work the enfeebling influences of the little doubtings, and little believings, and little wonderings, whose thin wail sounds in a conventional manner through so much of our current writing, whether in prose or verse, weakening life and distorting art. Mr. Morris's central quality is a vigorous and healthy objectivity, a vision and a fancy ever penetrated by the colour and light and movement of external things, just as they stir and penetrate the painter.<sup>6</sup>

Morley's attitude toward "escapism" in poetry and art was, I think, affected by his interest in rationalism, by his anti-theological convictions. It was thus possible for him to review Pater's *Renaissance* with approval, in spite of the apparent contradiction which the "Conclusion" offers to the Comtist conception of progress.

Here is Mr. Pater courageously saying that the love of art for art's sake has most of the true wisdom that makes life full. The fact that such a saying is possible in the mouth of an able and shrewd witted man of wide culture and knowledge, and that a serious writer should thus raise aesthetic interest to the throne lately filled by religion, only shows how void the old theologies have become.<sup>7</sup>

To Morley, Morris's work represented the liberation of art from theology;<sup>8</sup> he traced this liberation to Oxford

<sup>5</sup> *Fortnightly* 1 June 1868, p. 713

<sup>6</sup> *Idem*

<sup>7</sup> Mr. Pater's Essays, *Fortnightly*, xix (1873), p. 471

<sup>8</sup> The American *Catholic World*, from the opposite point of view, made the same observation: "some of his writings may seem to have a pagan tendency, and others may lead us to fear that the writer is in his heart a disciple of Comte and the positive philosophy—the philosophy which would eliminate theology altogether as a branch of science" ("The Poetry of William Morris," *Catholic World*, Oct. 1870, p. 98.) Cf. the opinion of a later rationalist critic on Morris and Rossetti: "It was indeed a memorable triumph for

The Newmanite generation at Oxford was followed by a generation who were formed on Mr. Mill's Logic and Grote's Greece. The aesthetic spirits were no longer able to find rest in a system associated with theology. Then Mr. Ruskin came, and the Pre-Raphaelite painters, and Mr. Swinburne, and Mr. Morris, and lastly a critic like Mr. Pater, all with faces averted from theology, most of them indeed blessed with a simple and happy unconsciousness of the very existence of the conventional gods. Many of them are as indifferent to the conventional aims and phrases of politics and philanthropy as they are to things called heavenly.<sup>9</sup>

Thus Morley welcomes the phenomenon of escape in art. There is no need to fear that the group which he finds represented by Morris and Pater will gain too large a following, "to the detriment of energetic social action in the country." But by avoiding useless theological speculation, by concentrating on art as an end in itself, they may help to re-establish the value of art and letters as a vital force. It is the paradox of the Utilitarians. No element of human activity may be neglected; and Morley, anxiously eclectic, hoped perhaps to show that rationalism need not be Philistine. Hence his acceptance of the "Conclusion;" such ideas, in their proper place, will fill a social need in the full development of man:

Only on condition of this spacious and manifold energizing in diverse directions, can we hope in our time for that directly effective social action which some of us think calculated to give a higher quality to the moments as they pass than art and song, just because it is not "simply for those moments' sake."<sup>1</sup>

Morley rightly recognized Walter Pater as the critic who represented the tendency toward "escapism" also found in Morris's work. It was in

rationalism, so often despised as a process of sterile negation, that by dissolving away the dead theological accretions of romanticism it should have reindowed English literature with this wonderful treasure of imaginative power and joy." See A. W. Benn, *The History of English Rationalism in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1906), II, 291-292.

<sup>9</sup> *Fortnightly*, xix (1873), p. 476.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 477. Cf. also Morley on Doré's illustrations for Tennyson's *Elaine*: "Morality is not the aim and goal of fine art, any more than it is the aim or measure of cobbling or of the art of physic. Art has for its end the Beautiful, and the Beautiful only. Morality, so far from being of the essence of it, has nothing to do with it at all." ("Causeries," *Fortnightly*, I Jan. 1867, p. 101.) Perhaps, however, there is a censure of Morris implied in Morley's review of *The Ring and the Book*; Browning, he remarks, is free from the sterility of thought which results from "unmanly reluctance to carry the faculty of poetic vision over the whole field." Browning is "careful not to omit realities . . . merely for being unsightly to the too fastidious eye, or jarring to the ear, or too bitterly perplexing to faith or understanding." ("The Ring and the Book," *Fortnightly*, March 1869, p. 341.)

a review of *The Earthly Paradise*<sup>2</sup> that Pater first published the famous paragraphs afterwards printed as the "Conclusion" to *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*. The manifesto of the idea of Art for Art's Sake<sup>3</sup> serves here as a justification for Pater's praise of poetry which makes no attempt to deal with religious or philosophical ideas. In Morris's poetry Pater finds a double departure from what he elsewhere calls "a tarnished actual present:"<sup>4</sup>

This poetry is neither a reproduction of Greek or mediaeval life or poetry, nor a disguised reflex of modern sentiment. The atmosphere on which its effect depends belongs to no actual form of life or simple form of poetry. Greek poetry, mediaeval or modern poetry, projects above the realities of its time a world in which the forms of things are transfigured. Of that world this new poetry takes possession, and sublimates beyond it another still fainter and more spectral, which is literally an artificial or "earthly paradise." It is a finer ideal, extracted from what in relation to any actual world is already an ideal. . . . The secret of the enjoyment of it is that inversion of homesickness known to some, *that incurable thirst for the sense of escape*, which no actual form of life satisfies, no poetry even, if it be merely simple and spontaneous<sup>5</sup>

As Mlle. Rosenblatt remarks, the idea of Art for Art's Sake does not necessarily demand an escape from the present and its problems; as a theory it was to serve in the defence of photographic realism.<sup>6</sup> But Pater brought the modified Cyrenaicism<sup>7</sup> of his theory of art to bear on precisely this element—escape from contemporary problems of belief—in Morris's poems:

The modern world is in possession of truths; what but a passing smile can it have for a kind of poetry which, assuming artistic beauty of form to be

<sup>2</sup> "Mr Morris's Poetry," *Westminster Review* Oct 1868, pp 300-312, a review of *Guenevere, Jason*, and Vol I of *The Earthly Paradise*. It was reprinted, with the exception of the concluding paragraphs, as "Aesthetic Poetry" in the first edition of *Appreciations*, 1889, but omitted from later editions. Reprinted in a collection of Pater's essays, *Sketches and Reviews* (New York, 1919), pp 1-19.

<sup>3</sup> Arthur Symonds, *Studies in Prose and Verse* (London, 1904), p 64. Cf Wilde's remark on the *Renaissance* to Yeats in 1887: "It is my golden book, I never travel anywhere without it, but it is the very flower of decadence: the last trumpet should have sounded the moment it was written." See W. B. Yeats, *Autobiographies* (New York, 1927), p 161.

<sup>4</sup> In the Postscript to *Appreciations, Works* (London, 1910), v, 253.

<sup>5</sup> *Westminster*, Oct 1868, pp 300-301. (My italics.)

<sup>6</sup> L. Rosenblatt, *L'idée de l'Art pour l'Art* (Paris, 1936), p. 115.

<sup>7</sup> See H. H. Young, *The Writings of Walter Pater* (Bryn Mawr, 1933), where the sensationist theory is derived from Hume. Cf also Rosenblatt, *op cit*, pp 186 ff., on the sources of the theory which Pater here develops in support of escapist poetry.

an end in itself, passes by those truths and the living interests which are connected with them, to spend a thousand cares in telling once more these pagan fables, as if it had to choose between a more and less beautiful shadow? It is a strange transition from the earthly paradise to the sad-coloured world of abstract philosophy. But let us accept the challenge; let us see what modern philosophy, when it is sincere, really does say about human life and the truth we can attain in it, and the relation of this to the desire of beauty.<sup>8</sup>

The best known passage in Pater's work, which sets forth the ideal of exquisite passions, quickened, multiplied consciousness, "the poetic passion, the desire of beauty, the love of art for its own sake," is the answer to this question. Morris's work was thus early identified with doctrines with which, as we shall see, he was to disagree in theory and in practice. It was significant that Pater attached the name "aesthetic poetry" to the new type which he recognized in the work of Morris: for Morris the poet and Morris the decorative artist were to be hailed as prophet by the Aesthetic School<sup>9</sup> which carried Pater's theories to their notorious extremes of absurdity and decadence.

Henry James had greeted *Jason* with the enthusiasm of youth, on its appearance in 1867:

To the jaded intellects of the present moment, distracted with the strife of creeds and the conflict of theories, it opens a glimpse into a world where they will be called upon neither to choose, to criticise, nor to believe, but simply to feel, to look, and to listen.<sup>1</sup>

His praise of *The Earthly Paradise* is similarly directed toward the health and objectivity of the work.<sup>2</sup> So too the *Spectator*, in a review of Part III, remarks upon this aspect of *The Earthly Paradise*:

It is Mr. Morris's happy faculty to cast utterly aside the complex questionings that vex our modern poetry. He carries us away to the days when men lived their life without overmuch thinking about it. . . . Mr. Morris has given us an effectual antidote for the over-wrought self-consciousness of this generation.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>8</sup> *Westminster*, Oct. 1868, p. 309. Pater's essay was mentioned in the *Spectator* (17 Oct. 1868, p. 1228) as "a most fantastic rhapsody, a transcendental hymn in praise of realism, if it has any meaning at all, which we are inclined to doubt."

<sup>9</sup> See W. Hamilton, *The Aesthetic Movement in England* (London, 1882), pp. 58-61.

<sup>1</sup> *North American Review*, Oct. 1867; Henry James, *Views and Reviews* (Boston, 1908), p. 71.

<sup>2</sup> *Nation*, 9 July 1868, pp. 33-34.

<sup>3</sup> *Spectator*, 12 March 1870, p. 332.

The *New York Times* indicates with considerable accuracy a reflection of English opinion on this matter:

We owe Mr. Morris too much gratitude for giving us a poem that we can enjoy without feeling that we ought to probe it for problems and morals, to attempt to find fault with him. We have grown somewhat weary of the modern metaphysical bards, who would set philosophy to music, and think no poem worthy of the name which does not propound a spiritual conundrum in every line, and unsettle a creed in every stanza.<sup>4</sup>

An impartial review by the *Pall Mall Gazette*, which was then, according to Mr. Mackail, "the great arbiter of cultured opinion,"<sup>5</sup> thus sums up:

Accepting as he does the part of a teller of tales, whose one task is to deal with delightful subjects in a delightful manner, Mr. Morris shuts himself out from some of the most fertile fields of poetry. He forswears speculation and reflection, refrains from touching, whether to solve or to restate, the questions nearest the hearts of his contemporaries, the moral and social problems with which so much modern poetry has occupied itself. . . . He thus recalls poetry to the sphere of true fine art proper, in which it has simply, along with music, painting, and the rest, to add to the sum of human happiness in the contemplation of enjoyable things.<sup>6</sup>

Criticism which thus accepted Morris's escape from the problems of belief<sup>7</sup> is complemented by the reception of his escape from the problems raised by political, social and industrial phenomena of the day. This is one traditional function of romantic poetry, a value which, judging by the reviews of Morris's work, had been neglected in the decades which preceded the publication of *The Earthly Paradise*. The *Pall Mall*, finding in Part III some increased prominence given to passion and emotion (the result of Morris's first-hand treatment of saga in "The Lovers of Gudrun"), regarded the first volume of *The Earthly Paradise* as particularly successful in escape:

Every reader almost was glad to retire from the stress and the cares of his ugly workaday English life and be entertained, for no matter how long,

<sup>4</sup> *New York Times*, 7 May 1870, p. 4

<sup>5</sup> J. W. Mackail, *The Life of William Morris* (London, 1899), I, 190. (My references are to the edition of 1922.)

<sup>6</sup> *Pall Mall*, 11 June 1868, p. 2204

<sup>7</sup> Further favorable references to Morris's escape from contemporary religious problems will be found in the following articles: *New Monthly Magazine*, Sept. 1871, pp. 280 ff.; *New Englander*, Oct. 1871, pp. 557 ff.; *Fortnightly*, xix (1873), pp. 147-148, a review of *Love Is Enough* by Sidney Colvin.

with that succession of gracious pictures and pleasant incidents of a remote romantic world.<sup>8</sup>

In a long and enthusiastic review of Part IV, a critic in the popular weekly *John Bull* found the chief merit of the poem in its "escapism":

At any period in the world's history *The Earthly Paradise* would have challenged attention, but as a product of the artificial society, the conventionality and the utilitarianism of the nineteenth century it is, indeed, surprising. And this contrast to the current literature and the current feeling of the day is perhaps its greatest charm. . . . We breathe a fresher air; we seem to shake ourselves free from the noise and turmoil of the restless driving life, and the fierce intellectual struggles of the present day, as he tells us in strains most musical his quaint old-world stories.<sup>9</sup>

In the same vein is a general article on Morris's work, written by Thomas Bayne and published in *St. James's Magazine* in January 1878. Morris was not a man born out of his due time:

. . . on the contrary, there is a sense in which he is one of those men this age particularly wants. Is it not the case that the world—all that roar of machinery and that hustle about wealth—is too much with us? . . . It is not necessary that Mr. William Morris, or, indeed, any single man whatsoever, should supply a full and adequate antidote to prevalent feverishness; but he does a distinct and notable service when he provides one possible means of escape.<sup>1</sup>

When *Sigurd* appeared in 1876, the review in the *Athenaeum* could thus speak of Morris's retreat from the surroundings of his age as perhaps the most conspicuous and familiar characteristic of his work:

There is no affectation in such antiquarianism as we get here. . . . Mischance has thrown Mr. Morris among railways, telegraphs, newspapers, and much "smoke." He cannot help being surrounded by such foolish comforts as these; but how he hates them he has told us in the "Earthly Paradise." His body is in Queen Square, but his soul is in Ultima Thule. . . . He consents to breathe the smoke with us, but it is in the atmosphere of the Golden Past that he lives.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>8</sup> *Pall Mall Budget*, 11 Dec. 1869, pp. 26-27.

<sup>9</sup> *John Bull*, 31 Dec. 1870, p. 901.

<sup>1</sup> *St. James's Magazine*, Jan. 1878, pp. 99-100.

<sup>2</sup> *Athenaeum*, 9 Dec. 1876, pp. 753-754. See also "Contemporary Portraits—William Morris," *University Magazine*, Nov. 1878, p. 564: "No doubt poetry is in more or less of opposition to the average life of the present day; but when the poet comes who is its exact polar opposite, by the law of contraries he is bound to be welcomed. To all those who feel themselves out of tune with the times, he is the natural friend and companion." Cf. *Southern Magazine*, April 1873, pp. 491 ff., a review of *Love Is Enough* by W. H. Browne.

*The Earthly Paradise* was received with approval because it furnished escape of another and more purely literary sort. The treatment of contemporary religious, moral, and social problems had come to be associated with the poetry of psychological analysis, and hence with the obscurity of Browning. In Morris's work the critics found relief from the difficulties which the British public had experienced in reading "Caliban" and "Mr. Sludge." *The Ring and the Book* appeared in parts between November and February, 1868-1869, during the time which elapsed between the publications of the second and third volumes of *The Earthly Paradise*. Browning was reaching his first wide contemporary popularity, and readers were puzzled by his style and method.<sup>3</sup> Morris's freedom from obscurity and over-subtlety was welcomed by the *Saturday Review*:

In these days, when the poetry most in vogue is such as it is one man's business to write and another's to interpret, it is refreshing to the spirit to meet with a modern poem of the Chaucerian type. If there is ground for the suspicion that not half of those who praise the subtleties of our contemporary poets are at pains to penetrate them, still less is it likely that such will put themselves about to study the explanations and elucidations which, although the tribute is surely a questionable compliment, admiring critics vie with each other in offering at their shrine.<sup>4</sup>

The Browning Society was not to be established for some years, but its function was already being exercised. Such poetry and such criticism were not for the practical man:

At any rate there is a fairer chance for poetry to be read and appreciated and taken back into favor by a busy material age, if its scope is distinct and direct, its style clear and pellucid, and its manner something like that of the old rhapsodists, minnesingers, and tale-tellers who in divers climes and ages have won such deserved popularity. So seems Mr. Morris to have thought.<sup>5</sup>

There is a disarmingly frank Philistinism in much of this praise of the poetry which does not require the reader to exert his mind; Morris's work seems occasionally to be regarded as a source of the kind of pleasure usually obtained in literature of a more ephemeral sort. Thus the

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *The Ring and the Book*, i, 1379-1385, where Browning comments on his increase in popularity. See also the *Sat. Rev.* on Browning's obscurity (26 Dec. 1868, p. 833): "It is nearly as hard to get through *Paracelsus* as to get through Dr. Salmon's *Analytical Conics*. Both of those excellent works are in the highest degree repaying; but we speak merely of the difficulty."

<sup>4</sup> *Sat. Rev.*, 30 May 1868, p. 730.

<sup>5</sup> *Idem.*



*Spectator*, in a review of the first volume of *The Earthly Paradise*, remarks:

Mr. Morris has revived the delightful art of dreaming the old dreamy stories in verse, so that they soothe and charm the ear and fancy without making any of the severe intellectual demands of most of our modern poets on the constructive thought and imagination of the reader. There is nothing more delightful than to escape from the problem-haunted poetry of the day into the rippling narrative of Mr. Morris's fresh and vivid fancy.<sup>6</sup>

Thus too the jauntily unintellectual barbarian attitude represented by *Vanity Fair* shows Morris's poem accepted for reasons not entirely complimentary to the poet:

Thank heaven, we are out of the fog at last! The days are gone when the more incomprehensible an author's writings the more poetical they were thought to be. The gentlemen of the nebulous school, those children of the mist, with their dark sayings, hidden wisdom, and strange distortions of language, have given place to a more intelligible race of beings. . . . Mr. Morris is as clear a writer as need be, and yet few would deny him a considerable share of true poetical fancy.<sup>7</sup>

But more discriminating criticism shows a genuine relief at the appearance of poetry free from self-analysis and "subjectivity." Charles Eliot Norton had reviewed *Jason* with just such relief, writing in the *Nation* in August 1867:

It is a great merit of his work that, in this period of self-consciousness, of morbid introversion, of exaggeration of the interest of individual feeling, he has told his story, with but very slight exception, objectively with simple regard to its own development.<sup>8</sup>

Morris's treatment of the classical and medieval and northern sources was untouched by allegory,<sup>9</sup> by the moral symbolism of Tennyson's

<sup>6</sup> *Spectator*, 20 June 1868, p. 737.

<sup>7</sup> *Vanity Fair*, 12 Feb. 1870, p. 96. Cf. the *Westminster* (April 1871, p. 581): "Mr. Morris's popularity has, however, something remarkable about it. He is, we have noticed, appreciated by those who as a rule do not care to read any poetry. To our personal knowledge, political economists and scientific men to whom Shelley is a mystery and Tennyson a vexation of spirit, read the 'Earthly Paradise' with admiration."

<sup>8</sup> *Nation*, 22 August 1867, p. 146.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. May Morris, *op. cit.*, 1, 430, for Morris's opinion of allegory and symbolism. Some one had asked him about the underlying meanings of his work: "I told him I meant what I said when writing. . . . Wordsworth's primrose by the river's brim is quite good enough for me in itself; what on earth more did the man want it to be?" See also Morris's letter to the *Spectator* denying allegorical intention in *The Wood Beyond the World* (20 July 1895, p. 81).

Greek and Arthurian poems, and by the scientific symbolism which Max Muller had made popular. This straightforwardness was also welcomed as an escape from contemporary preoccupations. *Blackwood's* thus reviewed the first volume of the poem:

Mr. Morris was born to be a teller of the tales of old, and he has not despised his vocation . . . To him a story of the olden time is dear for its own sake, the task he chooses is to set it forth in all the grace and beauty which are its rightful dowry, not to use it as a vehicle for subtle analysis of motive, or as an introduction to philosophical reflections. . . . He has dared to be himself. He has not sought to put off, or conceal, his love for the objective, in deference to a presumed love for the subjective on the part of his audience.<sup>1</sup>

Referring to the scientific study of folklore,<sup>2</sup> the *Saturday Review* praised Morris's fancy,

a fancy that does not escape into the favorite bypath of modern days, by regarding the mythic heroes and heroines as the impersonations of natural phenomena, or explaining them away upon the "bow wow" principle.<sup>3</sup>

In these various ways Morris's generation accepted his "escapism" as a virtue; and the motives which caused men to accept it as such lead, as we have seen, in widely divergent directions to Morley's interest in the religion of Humanity, to Pater's concern with the worship of Art, to the Philistines' desire of avoiding intellectual exertion.

### III

IN THE SMALL UNFAVORABLE PORTION of the critical response to *The Earthly Paradise*, Morris's "escapism" is again the criterion. The opinion which Arnold had pronounced "completely false" fifteen years before, that poets must interpret their age, was revived in the reviews of Morris's poem, and provoked a small critical controversy. Again, contemporary orthodoxy felt itself challenged by the poet's desire of es-

<sup>1</sup> *Blackwood's*, July 1869, p. 56

<sup>2</sup> On the currency of this form of interpretation see Douglas Bush, *Mythology and the Romantic Tradition* (Cambridge, 1937), pp. 398-399

<sup>3</sup> *Sat. Rev.*, 30 May, 1868, p. 730. Other articles praising Morris for his escape from the speculative, subjective and psychological poetry of his day will be found in the following periodicals: *Harper's Monthly*, Dec. 1867, pp. 125-126, *Tinsley's*, Oct. 1868, pp. 262-277, *Southern Review*, Oct. 1868, pp. 398-407, *Literary World* (Boston), 1 June 1870, pp. 3-4, *Sat. Rev.*, 24 Dec. 1870, pp. 808-809, *Spectator*, 28 Jan. 1871, pp. 103-105, *Scribner's*, April 1873, pp. 778-779

cape to show that Morris had not succeeded in his aim, that contemporary conflicts and currents of thought had affected his work.

It was not only the defenders of Victorian civilization who objected to Morris's "escapism." Alfred Austin published a series of critical articles entitled "The Poetry of the Period" in *Temple Bar* during 1869 which are remarkable for bitterness and discontent with contemporary life. The keynote is struck in the first essay of the series, on Tennyson: "As far as poetry is concerned, we and our day are not great, but little."<sup>4</sup> In August 1869 Austin devoted an article to Arnold and Morris. "We know all—or we think we do—but all we can effect with our knowledge is to sigh under the burden of it. The age is sick with a surfeit of analysis, and Mr. Arnold is sick with it."<sup>5</sup> But even in retreat from this pettiness and self-consciousness there is no hope for poetry:

[Morris], like Mr. Arnold, has taken the measure of the age . . . but, unlike Mr. Arnold, he has cut himself off from all its active influences, compounded of disgust, sanguineness, impatience, and despondency, and has surrendered himself wholly to the retrospective tendency of his time, which, when taken by itself, is the most pathetic and poetical proclivity of which the time is capable.<sup>6</sup>

To escape is necessary; Morris has made good his escape:

The realities of the latter half of the nineteenth century suggest nothing to him save the averting of his gaze. They are crooked; who shall set them straight? For his part, he will not even try. . . . He sings only for those who, like himself, have given up the age, its boasted spirit, its vaunted progress, its infinite vulgar nothings, and have taken refuge in the sleepy region.<sup>7</sup>

But the conclusion is a sterile one. Austin finds himself in the blind alley of the defeatist. His period will be known to posterity as "the age of Railways, the age of Destructive Criticism, or the age of Penny Papers."<sup>8</sup>

Mr. Morris has given the go-by to his age, and he has done wisely. But in doing so not only has he not produced great poetry—he has evaded the very conditions on which alone the production of great poetry is possible. Even in co-operation with an age—as the present one, for instance—it may

<sup>4</sup> *Temple Bar*, May 1869, p. 191.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, August 1869, p. 39.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, May 1869, p. 193: "Can anybody in his senses imagine posterity speaking of our age as the age of Tennyson? Posterity will be too kind to do anything so sardonic."

be impossible to develop it; but without that co-operation all hope of such is bootless and vain. . . . [Morris] is not a great poet—at most and at best the wisely unresisting victim of a rude irreversible current; the serene martyr of a mean and melancholy time.<sup>9</sup>

One of the few reviews of *The Earthly Paradise* which was, on the whole, unfavorable in tone, appeared in the *Edinburgh Review* after the fourth part of the poem had been published:

In all this there is not much in harmony with the thought and feelings, perhaps not even with the ethics, of our own day; and, as we are compelled in some degree to measure humanity by our own standard, we may fairly say that such works as these possess no great human interest.<sup>1</sup>

It was the *Quarterly*, however, that took the position of apologist for its own age. In an adverse review of Swinburne's *Songs Before Sunrise*, Rossetti's *Poems* (1870), and *The Earthly Paradise*, entitled "The Latest Development of Literary Poetry," the *Quarterly* traced to Keats the poets' tendency to withdraw from questions of the day, and blamed Morris particularly for this defect:

It is true that the picturesqueness of life that marked the period of Chaucer has almost entirely disappeared; it is true also that other arts like those of journalism and novel-writing have done much to supersede poetry in the representation of national manners; yet, after all deductions, enough remains of passion in politics, and individuality in character, to give opportunities to the poet who will seize them. That the opportunities have not been seized argues, we think, less the emptiness of the day than the incapacity of the poets.<sup>2</sup>

Again, in an article on "The Present State of English Poetry" in the following year the *Quarterly* repeated the charge:

We cannot, like the Elizabethan poets, "warble a native woodnote wild" in an age which is already over-civilized; and when Mr. Tennyson says that he "sings but as the linnet sings," it is plain that he deceives himself. If poetry is to live, we must have a poetry reflecting our own life and thought. The question then naturally arises, Do the materials for such poetry exist?

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, August 1869, p. 51. See Morris's letter to his publisher on this article (Mac-kail, *Life*, i, 208): "In another sixty years or so, when it won't matter three skips of a louse (as it don't matter much more now), I suppose we shall quietly fall into our places."

<sup>1</sup> *Edinburgh*, Jan. 1871, pp. 251-252. The *Academy* in its "Literary Notes" (1 Feb. 1871) mentioned this article as "characteristic of Philistine reviewing."

<sup>2</sup> *Quarterly*, Jan. 1872, p. 42; on Swinburne's reply, see C. K. Hyder, *Swinburne's Literary Career and Fame* (Durham, 1933), pp. 156 ff.

Mr. Morris unhesitatingly answers there are none; we live in an empty day.<sup>3</sup> . . . Why should we turn in preference to the legends of the Round Table, or the dreams of an Earthly Paradise? Themes of public interest are certainly not wanting.<sup>4</sup>

Here Morris is regarded as a member of a group. In Buchanan's attack on "The Fleshly School of Poetry" Rossetti, Swinburne and Morris had been ridiculed as "the Mutual Admiration School;"<sup>5</sup> the *Quarterly* thus connects "escapism" with the Pre-Raphaelite convention:

Other writers, failing any longer to find in modern society the images of romance, have turned back to the forms of the past, and have reduced poetry to such mere furniture and costume, as picturesque sonnets à la Dante, or stage "properties" after the Early English. Truly to those who look on life and poetry with these eyes, the present must indeed be "an empty day."<sup>6</sup>

To this article the *Academy*, which had been cordial in its support of the poets in question, replied in a vein of ironic acquiescence in the Philistinism of the *Quarterly*:

The *Quarterly Review*, in an article on "Modern English Poetry" in the current number, renews its polemic against a certain artistic school on the ground that its members systematically refuse to give expression to the main aspects of contemporary life. . . . The main current of intellectual energy runs now to science and politics and history and prose-fiction. . . . Poets themselves are a "survival"; and it is the law of survivals to dwindle and become extinct; while there are any left they might be allowed to feed in peace upon their natural food, the transformed emotions which arise from a vanished, decaying past.<sup>7</sup>

Another clear and recurrent theme in the critical reception of *The*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, July 1873 (in a review of H. Buxton Forman's *Our Living Poets*), p. 19.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>5</sup> "Thomas Maitland" [Robert Buchanan], "The Fleshly School of Poetry," *Contemporary*, Oct. 1871, p. 335: "Rozencranz, Guildenstern, and Osric [Swinburne, Morris, and Rossetti], finding it impossible to risk an individual bid for the leading business, have arranged all to play leading business together, and mutually to praise, extol, and imitate each other; and although by these measures they have fairly earned for themselves the title of the Mutual Admiration School, they have in a great measure succeeded in their object—to the general stupefaction of a British audience."

<sup>6</sup> *Quarterly*, July 1873, p. 21.

<sup>7</sup> *Academy*, 1 August 1873, p. 284. See also "A Reply to the 'Quarterly Review' on the Present State of English Poetry," *St. James's Magazine*, Oct., 1873, pp. 261-271. A condemnation of escapist tendencies in the "New Pre-Raphaelites" (Rossetti, Morris, Swinburne, and Burne-Jones) is made by C. F. Keary in an article on "The Germ," *Macmillan's*, Sept. 1876, pp. 439-447.

*Earthly Paradise* was suggested by Morris's avowed purpose of escaping from the present. The note of melancholy, the sense of the shortness of life which quickens and intensifies the desire of beauty, are of course the most immediately striking characteristics of Morris's poem, emphasized by his narrative technique as well as by the interpolated lyrics. Thus though Morris did not consider the problems raised by the alarming new conceptions of the physical basis of life, by agnosticism and rationalism—all of which were being agitated at the moment when his poem appeared—his work seemed to show signs of the despair which belonged to his generation. This was made particularly clear to contemporary criticism through Morris's avowed allegiance to Chaucer. In the *New Monthly Magazine* an article on "Geoffrey Chaucer and William Morris" is typical:

No poet can altogether escape from his own age, and Mr Morris has not escaped the sorrowful perplexities of this time by leaving out all consideration of, or allusion to, those problems that produce them, for their result remains, in an irrepressible note of sadness, through his entire writings.<sup>8</sup>

The historian Henry Hewlett, writing in the *Contemporary Review*, regarded *Jason* as untouched by doubt and fear; but he continues:

The appearance of "The Earthly Paradise" at once dispelled the hope that the school in which Homer and Chaucer are masters had found a permanent representative in Mr Morris. It was but too plain that "the strange disease of modern thought" [*sic*] had infected him like his fellows, that his unconscious serenity had been displaced by the brooding pain of self-consciousness. Instead of the healthy cheerfulness, the manly decisive tone of thought which the ancient masters might communicate to a faithful disciple, we find here the morbid melancholy sentiment, the fluctuating chaos of ideas that belongs to the modern sceptic.<sup>9</sup>

A later review by the poet Philip Bourke Marston, a friend of Rossetti, recalls Swinburne's contemptuous lines on Clough<sup>1</sup> as the poet of doubt:

It is curious to observe in narrative poetry how the writings even of Mr Morris, who at first sight may seem to be raising once more the banner of

<sup>8</sup> *New Monthly* Sept. 1871, p. 282.

<sup>9</sup> *Contemporary*, Dec. 1874, p. 108.

<sup>1</sup> See Swinburne's *Works* (Bonchurche Edition), xv, 283. Clough is "the weary and wearisome laureate of Oxonicules and Bostonicles whose message to his generation may be summed up as follows:

We've got no faith, and we don't know what to do

To think one can't believe a creed because it isn't true!

objective art, are suffused with the influence of a personal mood. Not only through the chaunts of the Wanderers in *The Earthly Paradise*, but through the animated tales themselves, runs the sad wail of a minor key, the burden of which is the transiency of human joy, strength, and glory—one more echo of that mental unrest which, un comforted by current faiths and unreconciled to scepticism, complains and doubts, and aspires while it desponds.<sup>2</sup>

Thus *Blackwood's* attempts to answer the question of Morris's melancholy, in comparing him with Chaucer:

Is it that no man escapes the influence of his century? that while as an artist Mr. Morris is not of our time, as a man he feels its perplexities; as a singer, the anxious brows of us his audience reflect a portion of their gloom upon him? \*

And the same magazine suggests, in a review of Part III of *The Earthly Paradise*, that Morris's treatment of female character may be influenced by contemporary fashions:

Rhodope must have been brought into this world somewhere in the eighteen-thirties, we should say, at the very earliest, and questions herself about herself as much as one of Miss Brontë's young ladies, or any of their free-spoken successors. She is more modest a great deal, but she is not more contented.<sup>4</sup>

The orthodox journals recognized in Morris's paganism the effects of contemporary infidelity, and censured it as such.<sup>5</sup> Criticism of a less doctrinaire sort also perceived that, in this respect, Morris had failed to escape; perhaps he had only surrendered intimate contact with his audience, as the *Examiner* suggested in a review of the first volume of *The Earthly Paradise*:

Paganism is gone, and faith in it has so perished utterly, that we cannot, with whole heart or mind, enter into its hopes and fears. . . . In the mere narrative of mortal toil and strife, our assent and curiosity go with the modern poet as with the modern historian . . . but in all that aspires to the higher and deeper stirrings of the human soul, all that would weave around us an ideal heaven and hell, with its beliefs and terrors, its heroism in suffering, its absolute faith in the omnipresence and omnipotence of gods, sympathetically moved by passions like our own,—the best effort of the nineteenth-century poet is doomed to a shadowy success at best, too near akin to failure.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *Academy*, 15 Jan. 1876 (in a review of E. C. Stedman's *Victorian Poets*), p. 47.

<sup>3</sup> *Blackwood's*, July 1869, p. 72.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, May 1870, p. 646.

<sup>5</sup> See *Christian Observer*, March 1870, pp. 196 ff.; *Dublin Review*, Jan., 1872, pp. 25 ff.

<sup>6</sup> *Examiner*, 6 June 1868, p. 356.

We have seen that the freedom of Morris's work from allegory and symbolism had been welcomed. But pure narrative treatment of myth and legend also laid him open to the charge of sterile paganism. The *London Quarterly Review* expressed what was perhaps an extreme opinion on this matter:

In the stories of monsters, maidens, heroes, gods, we have here no sense of concealed symbolic meaning, no hint at the truths of which these are dim and distorted traditions, no shadowing of the internal spirit, which alone can have given to them the power they still wield, and always have wielded, over the hearts of those that hear them.<sup>7</sup>

This refusal to deal directly with one important value in the material he treated, connected Morris's work with the freethought of his day:

Mr Morris is a strange spectacle. He is a man living in the nineteenth century, able to free himself—so far, of course, we mean, as these books go—from all Christian influences and ideas, yet who does not enter into the spirit of the ancient myths, and who thus practically gives a result of absolutely religionless work. As a consequence, the characters, as he presents them to our gaze, belong after all rather to the nineteenth century than to the old world days.<sup>8</sup>

More sympathetically, in a review which helped to increase the sale of Part III,<sup>9</sup> Sidney Colvin summed up the question of modern characteristics in Morris, and judged him "modern by his acute human consciousness and by his mood of mournful however kindly helplessness—ancient by his simplicity, directness, fecundity—individual both in his modernism and his antiquity."<sup>10</sup>

Thus the criterion of "escapism" in the critical reception of *The Earthly Paradise* indicates in cross-section what the men of Morris's generation demanded of poetry. Those who desired guidance and reassurance were disappointed; the *Academy's* critic, G. A. Simcox, observed.

The help that the narrator of *The Land East of the Sun and West of the Moon* promises is help for the guidance of thoughts that may serve to fill

<sup>7</sup> *London Quarterly Review* (not to be confused with John Murray's famous *Quarterly*), Jan. 1869, p. 508.

<sup>8</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>9</sup> See Morris's *Works* (London, 1910-1915), VI, x, also Burne Jones's letter to Colvin on this article, in E. V. Lucas, *The Colvins and Their Friends* (London, 1928), p. 35.

<sup>10</sup> *Pall Mall Budget*, 26 Nov. 1870, p. 24. Other criticisms of Morris's failure to escape from his own age will be found in *Athenaeum*, 17 Dec. 1870, pp. 796-797, *Appleton's Journal*, 22 June 1872, pp. 673-677, and conspicuously in a review of *Sigurd* in the *North American*, March 1877, pp. 323-325.



and cheer a few inactive years; the help that the prologue refuses is help to overcome the difficulties and perplexities of active life in the work-a-day world.<sup>2</sup>

Those who demanded social criticism, religious speculation, and psychological analysis were disappointed. But those who wished to deliver poetry from the beliefs and attitudes and conventions of the immediate time welcomed Morris's work, in so far as he appeared to have succeeded in such a deliverance. The latter group formed, as we have seen, a considerable majority.

#### IV

MORRIS was to dissociate himself, however, from the school with which the critics of *The Earthly Paradise* identified him. Such an identification was logical enough: if a poet withdrew from the treatment of current problems, he must assume artistic beauty of form to be an end in itself, and recall poetry to the sphere of fine art proper. Morris had identified himself with the movement, in his review of Rossetti's *Poems* (1870); in the book, said Morris, "no thought is allowed to overshadow that beauty of art which compels a real poet to speak in verse and not in prose."<sup>3</sup>

It was also natural that as a decorative artist Morris should have been regarded as the prime mover in the fashionable aestheticism which gave notoriety to the idea of Art for Art's Sake during the seventies and eighties.<sup>4</sup> His designs and dyes shared to some extent in the ridicule provoked by the movement.<sup>5</sup> But it was as a poet of escape that Morris was praised by Wilde, when the apostle of aestheticism carried his characteristically extreme form of "escapism" to America. Wilde's first lecture in America, delivered in New York in January 1882 and repeated several times thereafter, was entitled "The English Renaissance of Art"; the following *dicta* were included in it:

Art never harms itself by keeping aloof from the social problems of the day: rather, by so doing, it more completely realises that which we desire. . . . Into the secure and sacred house of Beauty the true artist will admit nothing

<sup>2</sup> *Academy*, 12 Feb. 1870, p. 121.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 14 May 1870, p. 200.

<sup>4</sup> W. Hamilton, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

<sup>5</sup> See a cartoon in *Punch*, 14 June 1879, p. 274, entitled "Art Embroidery, 1879;" and a review of *Patience* in the *Academy*, 30 April 1881, p. 327: "The pleasure of the eye is assured by a parade of damsels, first in the hues of Morris."

that is harsh or disturbing, nothing that gives pain, nothing that is debatable, nothing about which men argue.<sup>6</sup>

Wilde used the knights and ladies of Burne-Jones and *The Earthly Paradise* of Morris as dominant examples of "this exquisite spirit of artistic choice." It is indeed negative praise: the author of *Sigurd* could not have found it flattering.

As early as 1872 an anonymous writer in *Fraser's* had attempted to separate Morris from the movement. In an article on "Novelties in Poetry and Criticism" the writer comments on a new style in writing about art; he refers, I think, to the essays which Pater had been publishing from time to time since 1867, to be collected in *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* in 1873. This new manner

has spread to such an extent that it may be regarded as the mark of a separate aesthetic school, whose championship of Art as an end in itself has already been exerted in many directions. . . . Now we have aesthetic chairs which nobody can sit in, aesthetic wall-patterns which fly in one's face.<sup>7</sup>

Though the writer must have known of Morris's activity in the decorative arts, he remarks later that "Mr. Morris, though for the time being associated with the so-called latest school, stands in reality quite alone."<sup>8</sup> There was, indeed, less and less reason to regard Morris as a member of a literary group. Though he remained in close association with Burne-Jones, his friendship with Rossetti was finally broken in 1875, and he had never, after leaving Oxford, been an intimate friend of Swinburne.

When *Sigurd* appeared in 1876, criticism recognized in the poem a departure from the "escapism" which Morris had come to represent in poetry. Edmund Gosse remarked upon this in the *Academy*:

In the *Story of Sigurd*, however, for the first time, Mr. Morris is no longer "the idle singer of an empty day," but the interpreter of high desires and ancient heroic hopes as fresh as the dawn of the world and as momentous.<sup>9</sup>

The *Spectator* noticed the same change, but was disappointed; Morris was not doing what was expected of him:

<sup>6</sup> *The Complete Writings of Oscar Wilde* (Philadelphia, 1909), vi, 257.

<sup>7</sup> *Fraser's*, May 1872, pp. 595-596.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 596.

<sup>9</sup> *Academy*, 9 Dec. 1876, p. 557. Cf. the *London Quarterly* (April 1877, p. 211) on *Sigurd*: "It is a book in which Mr. Morris no longer occupies the station of an 'idle singer,' however sweet and perfect, but takes up the stern position of a poet concerned with the affairs of man's life and destinies."

The great beauty of Mr. Morris's poetry has always been, in our opinion, that it transported those who read it into a land of dreamful ease, where . . . we might fancy all toil and care and sin at an end. We cannot find in the whole poem [*Sigurd*] one of the delicious pieces of mournful harmony of which we had so many in the *Earthly Paradise* and *Love is Enough*.<sup>1</sup>

Within a year after the publication of *Sigurd* Morris began the series of lectures on the arts which showed how far his sympathies lay from the "escapism" of the aesthetic school.<sup>2</sup>

His first lecture, delivered at the Trades' Guild of Learning, London, in December 1877, set forth his opinion that cloistered and anti-social aestheticism is inevitably sterile:

Art has such sympathy with cheerful freedom, open-heartedness, and reality, so much she sickens under selfishness and luxury, that she will not live thus isolated and exclusive.<sup>3</sup>

In a lecture given at Birmingham in 1879 Morris developed the same idea further: "I cannot forget that, in my mind, it is not possible to dissociate art from morality, politics, and religion."<sup>4</sup> These lectures were being delivered (and published in pamphlet form) during the years when the aesthetic movement was reaching its height. Thus *Hopes and Fears for Art*, in which Morris had reprinted both the lectures from which I have quoted, appeared in 1882 as an attack on the ideas which Wilde was even then carrying across the Atlantic. Reviewing *Hopes and Fears for Art* in the *Fortnightly*, Edith Simcox pointed this out:

"Art for art's sake," art as a refined and subtle pleasure for the favoured few . . . are the objects of his [Morris's] confirmed distrust and disbelief. . . . He distrusts—and surely no one has a better right—the sincerity and earnestness of the so-called "artistic movement" mainly associated with his name, because of the share which fashion has had in its success as well as in its fall-

<sup>1</sup> *Spectator*, 3 Feb 1877, p 150

<sup>2</sup> The whole problem of the development of Morris's social-artistic philosophy is of course too large for discussion here. It is treated at length by Mackail (*Life*, II, chap xi-xiv). See also G. Fritzsche, *William Morris' Sozialismus und Anarchistischer Kommunismus*, Leipzig, 1927, A. von Helmholtz Phelan, *The Social Philosophy of William Morris*, Durham, North Carolina, 1927. On the highly important question of the influence of Ruskin, see especially Morris's preface to his Kelmscott reprint (1892) of the chapter "On the Nature of Gothic" from *The Stones of Venice*; and Mackail, *op. cit.*, II, 289. A brief but significant treatment by Morris of the whole question is given in "How I Became a Socialist," *Works*, xxiii, 278 ff.

<sup>3</sup> *Works*, xxii, 6. On its appearance in pamphlet form, this lecture was noticed favorably in the *Academy* (23 Feb. 1878) and the *Sat. Rev.* (2 March, 1878).

<sup>4</sup> *Works*, xxii, 47.

ings short of success. A social clique may bring blue plates and grey papers into vogue, just as an inconspicuous youth may be quizzed into celebrity by a comic paper, but the vogue will be as short-lived in the one case as in the other, unless the mass of householders attain to a sincere and spontaneous preference for harmony, beauty, and—we might add—elbow-room.<sup>5</sup>

In a lecture delivered at Dublin in 1886 on "The Aims of Art" Morris, now a declared Socialist, expressed his own opinion of the aesthetic movement:

The world is everywhere growing uglier and more commonplace, in spite of the conscious and very strenuous efforts of a small group of people towards the revival of art, which are so obviously out of joint with the tendency of the age that, while the uncultivated have not even heard of them, the mass of the cultivated look upon them as a joke, and even that they are now beginning to get tired of.<sup>6</sup>

The development of Morris's opinions toward a social view of art led him to turn away from the poetry of escape and to disown, to some extent, his own earlier work. Thus his censure of Swinburne's poetry, "founded on literature and not on nature," implies a condemnation of *The Earthly Paradise* which Morris makes no attempt to avoid:

In these days the issue between art, that is, the godlike part of man, and mere bestiality, is so momentous, and the surroundings of life are so stern and unplayful, that nothing can take serious hold of people, or should do so, but that which is rooted deepest in reality and is quite at first hand: there is no room for anything which is not forced out of a man of deep feeling, because of its innate strength and vision.

In all this I may be quite wrong and the lack may be in myself: I only state my opinion, I don't defend it; still less do I my own poetry.<sup>7</sup>

William Sharp, the friend and biographer of Rossetti, records another remark of Morris's in the same vein which refers directly to *The Earthly Paradise*:

"The best thing about it," he said once, "is its name. Some day or other that will inspire others when every line of the blessed thing is forgotten. *That's* what we're all working for." I have heard, though at the moment I cannot recall whether from a trustworthy source, that he once pooh-poohed

<sup>5</sup> *Fortnightly*, 1 June 1882, pp. 775-776.

<sup>6</sup> *Works*, xxiii, 86.

<sup>7</sup> Quoted by Mackail, *Life*, ii, 80.

the ideal beauty of *The Earthly Paradise*, and said that there was "more real ideal" in *News from Nowhere*.<sup>8</sup>

Again, in his Dublin lecture on "The Aims of Art," Morris turns away from "escapism" in words which reject Pater's "inversion of homesickness" and the poetry which had inspired the phrase:

The old art is no longer fertile, no longer yields us anything save elegantly poetical regrets; being barren, it has but to die, and the matter of moment now is, as to how it shall die, whether *with* hope or *without* it.<sup>9</sup>

But Morris never changed his mind about the fitness of contemporary scenes and subjects for painting and poetry. Realism seemed to him to involve compromise with a civilization which he hated; though he granted some validity to it in theory, he thought the practice impossible. In his account of art under the utopian conditions of *News from Nowhere* Morris replied to the critics of the poetry of escape. Clara, one of the young ladies in Morris's England of the future, has inquired about the selection of subjects from Grimm and other ancient myths for the murals in one of the community halls: "How is it that though we are so interested with our life for the most part, yet when people take to writing poems or painting pictures they seldom deal with our modern life, or if they do, take good care to make their poems and pictures unlike that life?" Hammond, the interpreter of the new society, replies:

It always was so, and I suppose it always will be. . . . It is true that in the nineteenth century, when there was so little art and so much talk about it, there was a theory that art and imaginative literature ought to deal with contemporary life; but they never did so; for, if there was any pretence of it, the author always took care (as Clara hinted just now) to disguise, or exaggerate, or idealise, and in some way or another make it strange; so that, for all the verisimilitude there was, he might just as well have dealt with the times of the Pharaohs.<sup>1</sup>

More specifically in an address on the English Pre-Raphaelites delivered at Birmingham in 1891 Morris dealt with this subject. Rossetti and Burne-Jones had not attempted to represent the scenes of ordinary modern life:

<sup>8</sup> William Sharp, "William Morris: The Man and His Work," *Atlantic Monthly*, Dec. 1896, p. 771.

<sup>9</sup> *Works*, xxiii, 92.

<sup>1</sup> *Works*, xvi, 101-102.

One has often heard that brought against the "Romantic" artists as a shortcoming. Now, quite plainly, I must say that I think it *is* a shortcoming. But is the shortcoming due to the individual artist, or is it due to the public at large? for my part I think the latter. When an artist has really a very keen sense of beauty, I venture to think that he can not literally represent an event that takes place in modern life. He must add something or another to qualify or soften the ugliness or sordidness of the surroundings of life in our generation. That is not only the case with pictures, if you please: it is the case also in literature.<sup>2</sup>

Morris uses Hardy's rustics as an example of this modification in contemporary treatment; he concludes with an apology for his own work. The artist or writer may deal with modern subjects if he wishes:

. . . on the other hand, I don't think he has a right, under the circumstances and considering the evasions he is absolutely bound to make, to lay any blame on his brother artist who turns back again to the life of past times; or who, shall we rather say, since his imagination must have some garb or another, naturally takes the raiment of some period in which the surroundings of life were not ugly but beautiful.<sup>3</sup>

There is no essential paradox here. Granted that the artist must deal powerfully with the life of his own day, and that "escapism" is "retrospective and pessimistic," if society is so constituted that the artist can play no organic part in it, if contemporary values are contemptible, then the social structure must be altered.<sup>4</sup> But *faute de mieux* the artist may turn for themes, background, inspiration to an epoch (for Morris this meant, of course, the Middle Ages) in which he feels spiritually at home.<sup>5</sup> Always personally consistent with this belief, Morris wrote, during the last years of his life, the series of long prose romances which are obviously untouched, in plot and atmosphere, by nineteenth-century England. As Bernard Shaw says:

This was a startling relapse into literary pre-Raphaelitism; and the Socialist movement as such took no interest in it. . . . But he needed a refuge from

<sup>2</sup> May Morris, *William Morris Artist Writer, Socialist* (Oxford, 1936), I, 304.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 305. Cf., however, Morris's direct treatment of modern themes in *Chants for Socialists* (1884-5) and *The Pilgrims of Hope* (1885-6).

<sup>4</sup> This is of course the Marxian view, it is most authoritatively stated by G. V. Plekhanov (with particular reference to the theory of Art for Art's Sake) in *Art and Society* (translated by Alfred Goldstein), New York, 1937.

<sup>5</sup> Morris's innate and instinctive medievalism is discussed by Mackail, *Life*, I, 10-13, the fullest treatment of the problem will be found in E. C. Kuster, *Mittelalter und Antike bei William Morris*, Berlin, 1928. Both critics suggest that Morris's medievalism was by no means negative and escapist, but a positive and personally valid ideal.

reality; and there was a limit to the number of times he could read the novels of Dumas *père*, his usual way of escape when his Socialist duties involved some specially grimy job in the police court or at the meetings of the League. I have used the Morris stories in that way myself, and found them perfectly effective.<sup>6</sup>

The public which persisted in considering Morris as primarily the poet of *The Earthly Paradise* naturally objected to the apparent contradiction between the poetry of escape and the socialistic activities of the poet. The bourgeois reaction to Morris's appearance at the Thames Police Court in September 1885 illustrates this. The *Spectator* referred to Morris as "the author of the *Earthly Paradise* and the author of the daisy-pattern wall paper,"<sup>7</sup> and commented in an editorial which shows some of the complacency that Morris was facing:

England is no longer a distressed nation. . . . Whatever may still be wanting to her perfect well-being, she is already the freest and most enlightened country of the globe. Surely, then, it might be thought, this is a time when the poet should again take to the pipe of peace. . . . Mr. William Morris, however, thinks that a war-cry is still needed, and that it is the office of the poet to supply it. . . . Mr. Morris accordingly suspends—if he has not finally abandoned—his devotion to mediaeval romance, and seeks an earthly paradise in an impossible future, instead of again finding it in a legendary past which his genius made real.<sup>8</sup>

To the *Saturday Review* H. D. Traill contributed a topical poem, "The Poet in the Police-Court," which also insisted that Morris should return to escapist poetry; he had been created by the gods

To rhyme of old-world legend and Greek myth,  
Not to run Quixote-tilts at Adam Smith. . . .

Were it not better that ye bore him hence,  
Muses, to that fair land where once he dwelt,  
And with those waters at whose brink he knelt  
(Ere faction's poison drugged the poet-sense)  
Bathed the unhappy eyes too prone to melt  
And see, through tears, men's woes as man's offence?

Take him from things he knoweth not the hang of,  
Relume his fancy and snuff out his "views,"

<sup>6</sup> Bernard Shaw, "Morris As I Knew Him," in *May Morris, op. cit.*, II, xxviii-xxix.

<sup>7</sup> *Spectator*, 26 Sept. 1885, p. 1256.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 10 Oct. 1885, p. 1335.

And in the real Paradise he sang of  
 Bid him forget the shadow he pursues.<sup>9</sup>

Thus Morris's best known work had set him in a category from which—despite his admission of the unsoundness or at best irrelevance of escapist poetry—the Philistines would not willingly release him. And his participation in an active and unpopular movement for social amelioration was even harder to forgive.

In short, Morris's literary fame was due largely to the welcome which his "escapism" received from his generation. The majority of his critics praised this quality in *The Earthly Paradise*, both as an actual escape from contemporary social and religious difficulties and as a literary escape from the analytical and problem-haunted poetry of the day. With aestheticism, the most conspicuous escapist movement of the century, Morris's social conscience later forbade him to sympathize, just as his artistic conscience and his innate medievalism forbade him to treat contemporary themes. But his most famous work obviously fulfilled a demand. Its popularity with the public was a chapter in the history of romanticism; its reception by the critics was one more proof of the latent Victorian dissatisfaction. Morris would not compromise. When evasion became impossible for him, he left his generation behind.

ENGLISH AND AMERICAN REVIEWS OF *The Life and Death of Jason*  
 (1867) AND OF *The Earthly Paradise* (1868-1870)

*The Academy*

12 February 1870, pp. 121-122 (by G. A. Simcox)

15 December 1870, pp. 57-58 (by Sidney Colvin)

*The American Literary Gazette*

15 June 1868, p. 98

*Appleton's Journal*

22 June 1872, pp. 673-677 (by R. H. Stoddard)

*The Athenaeum*

15 June 1867, pp. 779-780

30 May 1868, pp. 753-754

<sup>9</sup> *Sat. Rev.*, 26 Sept. 1885, p. 417; H. D. Traill, *Saturday Songs* (London, 1890), p. 12. Cf. the *Literary World* (Boston) in a review of *The House of the Wolfings* (30 March 1889, p. 105): "[Morris] has been cited to appear before judge and jury, in company with less liberal socialists. Yet to him art remains an enchanted land, where the light is soft and strange and no harsh note mars the music. He comforts his fellow-men by charming their careworn minds; for he comprehends the need of change of scene for their thoughts."



25 December 1869, pp. 868-869

17 December 1870, pp. 795-797

*The Atlantic Monthly*

August 1868, p. 255 (by T. W. Higginson)

June 1870, pp. 750-752 (by J. J. Piatt)

*Blackwood's Magazine*

July 1869, pp. 56-73

May 1870, pp. 644-647

*The Catholic World* (New York)

October 1870, pp. 89-98

*The Christian Observer*

March 1870, pp. 196-208

*The Contemporary Review*

December 1867, pp. 525-529

August 1868, pp. 631-633

*The Eclectic Magazine*

April 1872, pp. 394-399

*The Edinburgh Review*

January 1871, pp. 243-266

*The Examiner*

6 June 1868, pp. 356-357

8 January 1870, pp. 20-21

*The Fortnightly Review*

July 1867, pp. 19-28 (by A. C. Swinburne)

June 1868, pp. 713-715 (by John Morley)

*Fraser's Magazine*

February 1869, pp. 230-244 (by John Skelton)

*The Galaxy*

September 1868, pp. 425-429 (by Richard Grant White)

*The Guardian*

17 June 1868, p. 696

8 February 1871, p. 161

*Harper's Magazine*

December 1867, pp. 125-126

May 1870, pp. 774-775

April 1871, p. 777

*John Bull*

1 January 1870, p. 13

31 December 1870, pp. 901-902

*The Literary World* (Boston)

1 June 1870, pp. 3-4

*The Living Age*

11 July 1868, pp. 74-78

*The London Quarterly Review*

- January 1869, pp. 507-511
- January 1870, pp. 330-360 (by H. Buxton Forman)
- April 1871, pp. 251-258

*The Nation*

- 22 August 1867, pp. 146-147 (by Charles Eliot Norton)
- 9 July 1868, pp. 33-34 (by Henry James)

*The New Englander*

- January 1869, pp. 204-206
- April 1870, pp. 196-208
- October 1871, pp. 557-580 (by R. K. Weeks)

*The New Monthly Magazine*

- September 1871, pp. 280-286

*The New York Times*

- 13 June 1868, p. 2
- 7 May 1870, p. 4

*The North American Review*

- October 1867, pp. 688-692 (by Henry James)
- July 1868, pp. 358-361

*The North British Review*

- April 1870, pp. 294-297
- January 1871, pp. 610-613

*Once A Week*

- 17 August 1872, p. 148

*The Pall Mall Gazette*

- 25 July 1867, p. 348
- 11 June 1868, p. 2204

*The Pall Mall Budget* (weekly edition of the *Gazette*)

- 11 December 1869, pp. 26-27
- 26 November 1870, pp. 24-25

*Putnam's Magazine*

- October 1868, pp. 248-249
- April 1870, p. 506

*The Quarterly Review*

- January 1872, pp. 75-84 (American ed., pp. 39-49)

*The Rectangular Review*

- January 1871, pp. 474-478

*The Round Table* (New York)

- 11 July 1868, pp. 24-25

*The Saturday Review*

- 30 May 1868, pp. 730-731
- 11 December 1869, pp. 771-773
- 24 December 1870, pp. 808-809

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### *The Southern Review*

October 1868, pp. 398-407 (by W. H. Browne)

### *The Spectator*

15 June 1867, pp. 668-669

20 June 1868, pp. 737-739

5 February 1870, pp. 166-167

12 March 1870, pp. 332-334

28 January 1871, pp. 103-105

### *Temple Bar*

August 1869, pp. 35-51 (by Alfred Austin)

### *The Times* (London)

11 April 1868, pp. 10-11

10 October 1868, p. 4

### *Tinsley's Magazine*

October 1868, pp. 262-277

November 1870, pp. 464-465

### *Vanity Fair*

12 February 1870, p. 96

### *Westminster Review*

October 1869, pp. 300-312 (by Walter Pater)

April 1871, p. 581

# A Study of *The Way of All Flesh*

By CLAUDE T. BISSELL

**T**HE *Way of All Flesh* is best known as a work of satirical humor, containing a group of brilliantly malicious portraits, a number of epigrams that sometimes arouse thought and usually amuse, and a series of scenes that have been worked out with telling irony.<sup>1</sup> The novel, it is generally agreed, cannot be looked upon as an attempt to deal seriously with the problems of human conduct; it demands our attention, however, as a convincing indictment of a way of life that the twentieth century has learned to accept as typically Victorian, and as a work of invaluable criticism that is, however, entirely negative in its implications.<sup>2</sup> Doubtless this popular interpretation has helped to emphasize the peculiar quality of Butler's literary gifts and to illuminate some aspects of the novel. But it has involved a misinterpretation, possibly even an ignorance of Butler's purpose and what he felt to be his actual achievement, and has, as a consequence, stood in the way of a full understanding of the novel.

<sup>1</sup> A recognition of Butler's genius for sustained, satirical attack has not always carried with it such unqualified praise. Indeed, to many of Butler's readers, *The Way of All Flesh* is principally an unflinching and brutal attack on the institution of the family, and a particularly revolting example of personal satire. Butler tells us that one of his friends, after reading the manuscript of the novel, declared, "I had taken all the tenderest feelings of our nature and, having spread them carefully over the floor, stamped upon them till I had reduced them to an undistinguishable mass of filth, and then handed them round for inspection." See Henry Festing Jones, *Samuel Butler, a Memoir*, 2 vols. (London, 1919), I, 389. Paul Elmer More, although he praises the Butler of *Erewhon*, maintains that "only the smudged and smeared minds of a Bernard Shaw and a Gilbert Cannan" could call *The Way of All Flesh* a great book. See More, "Samuel Butler of Erewhon," *Shelburne Essays*, eleventh series (Boston, 1921), p. 199.

<sup>2</sup> M. Abel Chevalley's emphasis on the purely negative quality of the novel is representative of this widespread critical opinion. "Butler," he writes, "demonstrated, or thought that he had demonstrated, that neither the reason, nor the faith, nor the family of his day could serve as foundation for the moral life. He left nothing of them but a balance, a residue. What could stand upright on these fragments? His work is negative, despite its positive conclusions. It is a clearing away of English Victorian rubbish." See *The Modern English Novel*, trans. Ben Ray Redman (New York, 1925), p. 104. The positive implications of *The Way of All Flesh* have not, of course, gone without recognition in recent criticism. See especially the short, but highly suggestive account in *The History of the English Novel* by Robert Morss Lovett and Helen Sard Hughes (Boston, 1932), pp. 374-81.

What that purpose and achievement were can best be understood by examining the relationship between Butler the amateur scientist and the moral philosopher, and Butler the novelist. That he embodied a good many of his scientific ideas in *The Way of All Flesh* has, of course, always been recognized. When it was first published, R. A. Streatfield, Butler's literary executor, pointed out in an introductory note that the novel was "to a great extent contemporaneous with *Life and Habit*, and may be taken as a practical illustration of the theory of heredity embodied in that book." But the relationship between Butler's scientific ideas and *The Way of All Flesh* was far more intimate and fruitful than Streatfield's remark indicates. For these scientific ideas were, as I shall attempt to show, inseparable from a moral philosophy that could find its fullest expression, not in a technical scientific treatise, but in the literary form that deals most directly with problems of human conduct, the novel. *The Way of All Flesh*, then, is Butler's attempt to give artistic embodiment to a moral philosophy that grew out of a scientific theory. Obviously an analysis of the text in the light of some exact knowledge of the scientific books will constitute the most illuminating commentary on the novel.

An examination of the genesis and composition of the novel will indicate clearly the necessity of this approach. Such an examination will reveal more than the obvious fact that Butler wrote the novel at a time when he was deep in the exposition of his theory of evolution. It will prove conclusively that the ideas in the scientific books determined the very form that *The Way of All Flesh* took.

Encouraged by the success of the recently published *Erewhon*, Butler conceived the idea early in 1872 of giving the narrative skill shown in that book further and fuller scope in the novel. But he was incapable of writing anything, even a novel, unless he could work "*con amore* and under diabolical inspiration."<sup>3</sup> The idea of writing a book solely to amuse and divert people was repellent to him. On June 22, 1872, he wrote to Miss Savage, pointing out that he could not "settle down to writing a novel and trying to amuse people when there is work wants doing which I believe I am just the man to do, and which it seems to me is crying to be done. I shall never be quiet till I have carried out the scheme that is in my head."<sup>4</sup>

What the "work" and the "scheme" were became apparent with the

<sup>3</sup> *Letters between Samuel Butler and Miss E. M. A. Savage* (London, 1935), p. 38. (Butler to Miss Savage, March 9, 1873.) Henceforth referred to as *Letters*.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

publication of *The Fair Haven* in March 1873. The "work" was an attack on the superstitious elements in Christianity, and the "scheme" was an elaborate ironic method that only the most penetrating readers could be expected to appreciate fully. Yet *The Fair Haven* was an indication of Butler's growing interest in the novel. Indeed, it is not implausible that he intended at first to use the narrative in the introductory section of *The Fair Haven* as the basis for a full length novel, and only dropped the scheme when his passion for the ironic presentation of ideas became too strong for him.<sup>5</sup> The development of *The Fair Haven* illustrates a general principle underlying all of Butler's literary work: his imagination had to be constantly nourished by a fund of ideas that he found exciting and profoundly significant.

In August 1873, Butler began work on the story that was eventually to become *The Way of All Flesh*. He had abandoned the attempt to contrive a plot, and had decided to make use of his own personal experience and of actual details that needed only a slight transformation to fit into his scheme. As yet he did not see the novel as a dramatization of his scientific ideas; he did not become actively interested in *Life and Habit*, his first scientific book, until 1875. His main concern was the development of a satisfactory technique of exposition that would enable him both to indulge in ironical comment and to express with some directness his own personal convictions.

At one time he considered the possibility of expressing his own ideas in the story solely by ironical implication. Miss Savage, whose criticism Butler always respected and usually followed, discouraged him from adopting this method by pointing out that much of the novel's meaning would be lost on all but the most penetrating readers. "In a novel," she argued, "it will scarcely be a gain that simple and literal-minded

<sup>5</sup> On June 16, 1872, Butler wrote to Miss Savage (*Letters*, p. 27), suggesting this subject for a novel: "A hero, young, harum scarum, with keen sense of fun, and few scruples, allows himself to be converted and reconverted at intervals of six months or so, for the sum of £100 on each occasion, from the Church of Rome to Methodism, by each of two elderly maiden relatives who have a deep interest in the soul of the hero and in the confusion of one another. In *The Fair Haven* the hero's career as sketched in the introductory narrative is not greatly different from the career of the 'young, harum scarum, with keen sense of fun and few scruples.' At an early age he deserts orthodox Anglicanism when he makes the shocking discovery that infant baptism is no assured guarantee of virtue. Convinced that infant baptism has no valid spiritual worth, he "to [his] mother's inexpressible grief, joined the Baptists, and was immersed in a pond near Dorking." Later he succumbs to the solicitations of a Roman Catholic missionary and embraces the Roman Catholic faith, which in turn he abandons for an extreme form of deism. Finally he enters "the fair haven" of a liberal and undogmatic Christianity.

people should be taken in. A novel is not a book like *The Fair Haven*.”<sup>6</sup> Butler followed Miss Savage’s advice, and returned to his original idea of introducing a character, the elderly and philosophically-minded Overton, who is both an actor in the plot and a spokesman for the author’s ideas. The device proved to be an admirable one for Butler, since it enabled him to express his own point of view with some clearness, and saved him from the artistic fault of isolating that point of view from the dramatic context of the novel.

Butler worked at the early chapters of the novel until the summer of 1874, when the failure of a Canadian company in which he had invested the greater part of his fortune forced him to go to Canada in an attempt, doomed to failure, to recover part of his investment. While he was in Canada from June 1874 to December 1875, Butler wrote only the famous *A Psalm of Montreal* and a few passages that were later incorporated into *Life and Habit*. On his return to England he immediately began work on *Life and Habit*, which, developed at first merely as an ingenious paradox, rapidly became a serious solution of the problem of heredity. “I have never,” he wrote to Miss Savage, “been so taken with a subject, since I wrote *The Fair Haven*.”<sup>7</sup>

Not until May, 1878, several months after the publication of *Life and Habit*, did Butler return to the novel. Then he discovered that what he had written no longer pleased him.<sup>8</sup> It was necessary not only to rewrite this early material but to change the whole scheme of the novel. The new manuscript that he sent to Miss Savage was, he explained, “full of little contradictions—I having intended at one time to turn the thing in one way, and then turned it in another.”<sup>9</sup> What Butler’s original intention was we do not know; but it is in harmony with the evidence and with our knowledge of the working of his creative processes to conclude that the new plan was largely the outgrowth of his intense interest in the ideas recently developed in *Life and Habit*. With the new plan firmly in mind, Butler found the novel growing rapidly, and by July, 1878, he had reached the point in the story where Ernest gets into his “worst scrape.” Again he left the novel to devote himself primarily to scientific controversy,<sup>1</sup> and did not return to it until May,

<sup>6</sup> *Letters*, p. 74 (November 10, 1873).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 115 (January 15, 1876).

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 181. “And now you take up your novel again and say it isn’t good—which is treating it unfairly. I am sure it is good.” (Miss Savage to Butler, May 5, 1878).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 188. (July 2, 1878.)

<sup>1</sup> *Evolution, Old and New* was published in May 1879, the articles later collected under the title *God the Known and God the Unknown* began to appear about the same time, and *Unconscious Memory* was published in November, 1880.

1882; all of the early material was rewritten, and what was intended to be merely the first draft of the concluding section was finished by the end of 1883.

What reawakened Butler's interest in the novel, then, and supplied him with its central, unifying idea was his realization that his scientific ideas had implications that could be expressed only in terms of human nature and conduct. The critic of *The Way of All Flesh* must face the task of finding out what those ideas were, encouraged by Butler's ready admission that in the scientific books he was "trying to paint a picture rather than to make a diagram."<sup>2</sup>

I

It is in *Life and Habit* that we find the most complete elaboration of Butler's positive position. He begins by insisting on the unconsciousness of perfectly assimilated knowledge. The accomplished pianist, for instance, is one who has so thoroughly mastered a piece of music that he is no longer conscious of the intricate relationship among the notes. Consciousness, on the other hand, betrays a lack of perfect knowledge. "Conscious knowledge and volition are of attention; attention is of suspense; suspense is of doubt; doubt is of uncertainty; uncertainty is of ignorance; so that the mere fact of conscious knowing or willing implies the presence of more or less novelty and doubt."<sup>3</sup> How then is it possible to obtain the unconsciousness of perfect knowledge? If we repeat an action a sufficient number of times, memory of past performances will store up impressions so that the action will be performed unconsciously. This fairly obvious truth becomes with Butler a key to the understanding of the evolutionary process.

Some of the actions which we perform, such as digesting, require no conscious attention; they have, so Butler contends, passed into the realm of unconscious knowledge, and this, too, even before we emerge from the womb. For the embryo has exactly the same kind of reasoning power and contrivance which we claim for our own intelligent performances in later life. That the embryo is unconscious of its own forethought indicates only that after a great number of repetitions, action ceases to be perceived. Other actions, such as walking and speak-

<sup>2</sup> *Life and Habit* (IV); p. 246. All references to Butler's books are to *The Shrewsbury Edition of the Works of Samuel Butler*, ed. by H. F. Jones and A. T. Bartholomew; 20 vols. (London, Cape, 1923-25). Each volume will be identified in the edition by a number in parentheses after the title.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.



ing, become part of our unconscious knowledge early in life, but at first they demand the exercise of conscious thought. How are we to account for these facts? It is merely a begging of the question, says Butler, to say that the unconsciousness with which we perform certain acts is to be attributed to "racial memory." The individual must remember things that he has done in his own person, if we are to attribute unconsciously performed actions to the power of memory.

At this point, Butler brings forward a suggestion that he feels will solve the problem of how we come to perform certain actions unconsciously. If, he says, we grant that the octogenarian and the child are the same person, surely it is just as logical to say that the embryo is identical with the new-born child, and consequently with the octogenarian:

What is true of one hour before birth is true of two, and so on till we get back to the impregnate ovum, which may fairly claim to have been personally identical with the man of eighty into which it ultimately developed.<sup>4</sup>

If we follow through this line of reasoning to its logical conclusion, we must finally admit that each one of us is "*actually* the primordial cell which never died nor dies, but has differentiated itself into the life of the world, all living beings whatever being one with it and members one of another."<sup>5</sup> What Butler does, then is to "personalize" life, to represent it as a single, unified force, which has, however, split up into a multitude of individuals. Why life should have followed this course, Butler does not attempt to answer. It might very well have grown up into a huge polyp, conscious but of its own single existence, instead of splitting up into individual members.

Memory, then, gives the key to an understanding of heredity; indeed memory and heredity are substantially the same. Life is a unity, and there is no clear-cut division between the generations. Does not the acceptance of these two ideas rule out the possibility of change and improvement, for if whatever we do is dependent on our memory of what has been done before in the persons of our ancestors, life would be merely a monotonous repetition of the same actions? But memory, Butler answers, does not make for absolute repetition of past incidents. "On any repetition . . . the circumstances, external or internal or both, never are absolutely identical: there is some slight variation in each

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

individual case, and some part of this variation is remembered, with approbation or disapprobation as the case may be."<sup>6</sup> This fact, Butler goes on to say, "is the key to accumulation of improvement, whether in the arts which we assiduously practice during our single life, or in the structure and instincts of successive generations."<sup>7</sup> The memory cannot only accommodate itself to change, but actually finds some change necessary for its effective functioning. If, however, the change is too great, the organism "must be made so uncomfortable as to be unable to remember itself as subjected to any such difficulties, and therefore to die through inability to recognize its own identity further."<sup>8</sup> The evolutionary process is a gradual and almost imperceptible growth; a too violent cleavage with the past means disaster, and usually, death.

Such a theory of evolution could not be reconciled with Darwinism. Where Butler "vitalized" nature, Darwin saw it as an impersonal force expressing itself according to mechanical laws. Where Butler made the evolutionary process dependent on the power of memory to hand on acquired characteristics, combined with the ability of the organism to shape itself in accordance with need and desire, Darwin made it dependent on the emergence of fortuitous variations, and their eventual selection in the struggle for survival.

In the last part of *Life and Habit*, and throughout his three subsequent scientific books, Butler was chiefly concerned with attacking the idea of "natural selection," and with defending his own vitalistic or Lamarckian theory of evolution. Repeatedly in these books, he appeals to man's "common sense":

I believe that nine fairly intelligent and observant men out of ten, if they were asked which they thought most likely to have been the main cause of the development of the various phases either of structure or instinct which we see around us, namely—sense of need, or even whim, and hence occasional discovery, helped by an occasional piece of good luck, communicated, it may be, and generally adopted, long practiced, remembered by offspring, modified by changed surroundings, and accumulated in the course of time—or, the accumulation of small divergent, indefinite, and perfectly unintelligent variations, preserved through the survival of their possessor in the struggle for existence, and hence in time leading to wide differences from the original type—would answer in favour of the former alternative.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> *Unconscious Memory* (vi), p. 185.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> "God the Known and God the Unknown," *Collected Essays* (xviii), p. 9

<sup>9</sup> *Life and Habit*, p. 202.

We can see the former process at work in the development of man's latest, and most powerful organisms, machines, and there is really no need to go for our facts among the lower animals. It is the humanist primarily who speaks here; but the scientific thinker also found cogent reasons for distrusting the principle of "natural selection."

Natural selection, Butler says, does not probe beneath the surface of life. It merely states that when variations have arisen, they will accumulate, and offers no explanation of why the variations should occur at all. Moreover, Butler argues, there must be some directing force that will give a "backbone" to the evolutionary process. It is difficult to believe that natural selection could select variations in such a way as to bring about new species:

. . . A strong impression is left on my mind, that without the help of something over and above the power to vary, which should give a definite aim to variations, all the "natural selection" in the world would not have prevented stagnation and self-stultification, owing to the indefinite tendency of the variations, which thus could not have developed either a preyer or a preyee, but would have gone round and round the primordial cell till they were weary of it.<sup>1</sup>

As a result of his own researches into the nature of the evolutionary process, and of his perception of certain basic flaws in the Darwinian theory, Butler found himself in substantial agreement with Lamarckism, even although orthodox science looked upon Lamarck as beneath serious consideration.<sup>2</sup> Lamarck's theory takes into consideration the very factors that Darwin had ignored:

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 230.

<sup>2</sup> In 1844 Darwin wrote to Hooker, describing his work on the "question of the immutability of species;" he remarked that "with respect to books on this subject, I do not know of any systematic ones, except Lamarck's, which is veritable rubbish." (*Life and Letters of Charles Darwin*, ed. Francis Darwin; 2 vols.; New York, D. Appleton and Co.; 1888; I, 390.) After the *Origin of Species* was published, the high priest of the new theory, Huxley, insisted upon the revolutionary nature of Darwin's contribution to the theory of evolution. In a letter to Sir Charles Lyell, August 17, 1862, Huxley wrote: "If Darwin is right about natural selection—the discovery of the *vera causa* sets him to my mind in a different region altogether from all his predecessors—and I should no more call his doctrine a modification of Lamarck's than I should call the Newtonian theory of the celestial motions a modification of the Ptolemaic system. Ptolemy imagined a mode of explaining the motions. Newton proved their necessity from the laws and a force demonstrably in operation." (Leonard Huxley, *Life and Letters of Thomas Henry Huxley*; 2 vols.; New York, D. Appleton and Co., 1900, I, 215.) But twenty years later, Huxley wrote in a letter to Romanes, May 9, 1882: "I am not likely to take a low view of Darwin's position in the history of science, but I am disposed to think that Buffon and Lamarck would run him hard in both genius and fertility. In breadth of view and in extent of knowledge these two men were giants, though we are apt to forget their

According to Lamarck, there is a broad principle which underlies variations generally, and this principle is the power which all living beings possess of slightly varying their actions in accordance with varying needs, coupled with the fact observable throughout nature that use develops, and disuse enfeebles an organ, and that the effects, whether of use or disuse, become hereditary after many generations<sup>3</sup>

The Lamarckian theory calls for a definite element of conscious design in the evolutionary process. But Butler was careful to describe this design in such a way as to avoid any dependence on the Christian metaphysics or on the crude teleology of a Paley. Although Butler finds it impossible to avoid the conclusion that the presence of design in life must indicate the existence of a personal designer, there is no necessity, he believes, to look for this "person" outside the evolutionary process. For Butler, as we have seen, made the evolutionary process itself a person, he saw all forms of life as making up one enormous individual ever in process of change and self fulfillment. Here, then, is our designer, "a living tangible person with flesh, blood, eyes, nose, ears, organs, senses, dimensions, who did of his own cunning after infinite proof of every kind of hazard and experiment scheme out and fashion each organ of the human body"<sup>4</sup>

If we are to think of design as something embedded in life, some of whose power is present in each living creature, and thus avoid the concept of a designing God, who is apart from life, it is just as essential that we rid ourselves of a teleology that sees each development as directed toward some preconceived end. Butler's teleology is rigidly limited. Although he insists upon "cunning" as an all important factor in the evolutionary process, he is, nevertheless, aware of the immense importance of luck. Indeed, his use of the word "cunning" suggests that his design is not guided so much by pure intelligence as by a sort of supra-intelligent faith or intuition. The individual sees, as it were, but a short distance into the future.

Our own design is tentative, and neither very far fore seeing nor very retrospective, it is a little of both, but much of neither, it is like a comet

services' (*Life and Letters of T. H. Huxley* II, 42). A possible conclusion is that the change in Huxley's attitude was brought about by the reading of Butler's *Evolution Old and New*, which came out in 1879, and of which a second edition had just appeared when Huxley wrote to Romanes, although Butler is not mentioned once in the *Life and Letters*.

<sup>3</sup> *Evolution, Old and New*, (v), p. 298

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26

with a little light in front of the nucleus and a good deal more behind it, which ere long, however, fades away into the darkness; it is of a kind that, though a little wise before the event, is apt to be much wiser after it, and to profit even by mischance so long as the disaster is not an overwhelming one; nevertheless, though it is interwoven with luck, there is no doubt about its being design.<sup>5</sup>

Although Butler arrived at a belief in the Lamarckian theory as a result of careful thought and painstaking study of the literature of evolution, it is evident that a strong moral idealism, which found the Darwinian theory a revoltingly pessimistic interpretation of life, had much to do with the formation of his ideas. What revolted Butler was that the Darwinian theory had, as he put it, no moral "backbone." Whereas Lamarckism involved a gradual progressive development, Darwinism was quite compatible with, and even acknowledged the probability of occasional regress, so that the progress of one generation might well be cancelled by that of the next. Repeatedly Butler maintains that Lamarckism is the faith that man's moral need demands. At first, he was not sure that Lamarckism was anything more than a delightful dream:

Will the reader bid me awake with him to a world of chance and blindness? or can I persuade him to dream with me of a more living Faith than either he or I had as yet conceived as possible? As I have said, reason points remorselessly to an awakening, but Faith and hope still beckon to the dream.<sup>6</sup>

But as the scientific background of the theory became clearer in Butler's mind, he ceased to make a comparison between a dream of beauty and a reality of despair, and drew the distinction between the reality of intelligence and cunning and the nightmare of waste and luck. In *Evolution Old and New*, he examined the contributions made by the early naturalists, Buffon, Erasmus Darwin, and Lamarck, to the theory of evolution, and concluded that "it is not they who have put their hands over their own eyes and ours, and who are crying out that there is no light, but chance and blindness everywhere."<sup>7</sup> When a reviewer of *Life and Habit* accused him of supporting a pessimistic theory, he replied:

<sup>5</sup> *Luck or Cunning?* (viii), p. 9.

<sup>6</sup> *Life and Habit*, p. 250.

<sup>7</sup> *Evolution, Old and New*, p. 37.

I have a very vague idea what pessimism means, but I should be sorry to believe that I am a pessimist. Which, I would ask, is the pessimist? He who sees love of beauty, design, steadfastness of purpose, intelligence, courage, and every quality to which success has assigned the name of "worth," as having drawn the pattern of every leaf and organ now and in all past time, or he who sees nothing in the world of nature but a chapter of accidents and of forces interacting blindly<sup>8</sup>

The issue, Butler wrote, lies squarely between a system where the fittest survive as the result of variations "into which a moral and intellectual system of payment according to results has largely entered," and a system where variations "have been thrown for with dice."<sup>9</sup> In a series of essays, known collectively as *The Deadlock in Darwinism* (1890), which constituted his final word on the evolution question, Butler's "moral" approach became unmistakably evident:

According . . . to extreme Charles Darwinians and Weismannists, habit, effort and intelligence acquired during the experience of any one life goes for nothing. Not even a little fraction of it endures to the benefit of offspring. It dies with him in whom it is acquired, and the heirs of a man's body take no interest therein. To state this doctrine is to arouse instinctive loathing; it is my fortunate task to maintain that such a nightmare of waste and death is as baseless as it is repulsive.<sup>1</sup>

The tone of this passage recalls a number of passages, similarly inspired, in the works of George Bernard Shaw, who more than any other contemporary thinker and artist owes much to the pioneering work of Butler.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52

<sup>9</sup> *Luck or Cunning?* p. 67

<sup>1</sup> "Deadlock in Darwinism," *Collected Essays* (xix), p. 40

<sup>2</sup> Cf. especially this passage from the 'Preface to *Back to Methuselah* Prefaces' (London, 1934), p. 498: "as compared to the open-eyed intelligent wanting and trying of Lamarck, the Darwinian process may be described as a chapter of accidents. As such, it seems simple, because you do not at first realize all that it involves. But when its whole significance dawns on you, your heart sinks into a heap of sand within you. There is a hideous fatalism about it: a ghastly and damnable reduction of beauty and intelligence, of strength and purpose, of honour and aspiration, to such casually picturesque changes as an avalanche may make in a mountain landscape, or a railway accident in a human figure. To call this Natural Selection is a blasphemy, possible to many for whom Nature is nothing but a casual aggregation of inert and dead matter, but eternally impossible to the spirits and souls of the righteous. If it be no blasphemy, but a truth of science, then the stars of heaven, the showers and dew, the winter and summer, the fire and heat, the mountains and hills, may no longer be called to exalt the Lord with us by praise: their work is to modify all things by blindly starving and murdering everything that is not lucky enough to survive in the universal struggle for hog wash."

That Butler should also attack the current materialism, defended by such ardent neo-Darwinians as Huxley and Tyndall, was inevitable. This materialism, which would admit that "feeling and consciousness attend the working of the world's gear, as noise attends the working of a steam-engine," but would insist that "consciousness produced no more effect in the working of the world than noise on that of the steam-engine"<sup>3</sup> was, so Butler felt, the natural concomitant of the Darwinian theory of natural selection. "It was natural that those who had been foremost in preaching mindless, designless luck as the main means of organic modification, should lend themselves with alacrity to the task of getting rid of thought and feeling from all share in the direction and governance of the world."<sup>4</sup> As for Butler, he preferred to think that there was a "low kind of livingness even in matter, that life eternal explained more of the phenomena of existence than matter eternal."

With the validity of Butler's scientific ideas we are not primarily concerned. If his books did provide a salutary check to the uncritical acceptance of Darwinism, they have never received any extended or serious notice by professional biologists.<sup>5</sup> But, as I have already suggested, the scientific ideas are important if we are to understand Butler's artistic expression of problems of human conduct. For morals and science were never sharply separated in Butler; if he approached the study of science with something of the fervor of the moralist, he examined moral ideas with something of the detachment and the clear-sightedness of the scientist.

<sup>3</sup> *Luck or Cunning?* p. 118.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> The brilliance of some of Butler's ideas has not gone without recognition in the works of modern biologists. Clara G. Stillman in her study of Butler (*Samuel Butler: The Viking Press, 1932*) lists on pp. 161-163 a number of distinguished scientists who have found his ideas worthy of serious consideration. In his theory of evolution, Shaw is, of course, a disciple of Butler but, like Butler, speaks as an artist-philosopher who hates professionalism of all kinds rather than as a scientist. C. E. M. Joad in his *Samuel Butler* (London, 1924) brings the weight of some philosophical authority to the defense of Butler's scientific ideas. The frequently made claim that Butler prophetically anticipates Bergson's theory of creative evolution must be dismissed in the light of Bergson's own comments contained in two letters published by Floris De Latre (*Revue Anglo-américain*, xiii (1935-36), 386-405.) Bergson points out that he did not know Butler even by name before 1914, and that Butler's books, brilliant criticisms of Darwinism that they are, in no sense anticipate his own theory of evolution. Whereas Butler's theory is largely a restatement of Lamarckism, and emphasizes gradual progress as a result of the inheritance of acquired characteristics, Bergson's theory involves a complete repudiation of the doctrine of acquired characteristics and an insistence on evolutionary development through sudden emergences of new levels of life.

Paradoxically, the writer who waged unceasing war against Darwinism in the name of a moral principle, who repeatedly affirmed that the scientists and not the clergy were his real enemies,<sup>6</sup> nevertheless did more than any of his contemporaries to undermine the foundations of Victorian morality by setting up what virtually amounted to a biological criterion for human conduct. But this apparent inconsistency in Butler's thought is easily resolved. He could make the evolutionary process the source of all his moral ideas, simply because that process as he conceived it was an essentially moral one. Darwinians like Huxley, however, who had first found in the working of the evolutionary process something closely akin to a saving gospel were eventually forced to admit that man must look for his moral guidance apart from the scheme of nature. "Cosmic evolution," wrote Huxley, "may teach us how the good and the evil tendencies of man came about; but, in itself, it is incompetent to furnish any better reason why what we call good is preferable to what we call evil than we had before."<sup>7</sup> But Butler could not conceive of man's moral nature as something apart from and opposed to the evolutionary process.

That Darwin was entitled to examine man's nature in the light of principles derived from the study of the lower animals, Butler never denied. It is significant that he never directed his attack against the *Descent of Man*, but only against the *Origin of Species*. In many respects he found himself in substantial agreement with thinkers who attacked Darwinism on orthodox religious grounds; but when these thinkers argued that any evolutionary theory could never account for the moral sense in man, Butler was forced to part company with them. This was the attitude he took up towards Mivart's *Genesis of Species*:

When Mr. Mivart deals with evolution and ethics, I am afraid that I differ from him even more widely than I have done from Mr. Darwin. He writes (*Genesis of Species*, p. 234): ". . . We may safely affirm that 'natural selection' could not have produced from the sensation of pleasure and pain experienced by brutes a higher degree of morality than was useful; therefore it could have produced any amount of 'beneficial habits,' but not abhorrence of certain acts as impure and sinful."

Possibly "natural selection" may not be able to do much in the way of

<sup>6</sup> H. F. Jones, *Samuel Butler*, i, 385: "It is not the bishops and archbishops I am afraid of. Men like Huxley and Tyndall are my natural enemies, and I am always glad when I find church people recognizing that the differences between them and me are, as I believe myself, more of words than of things." (Letter to Miss Butler, 1883).

<sup>7</sup> T. H. Huxley, "Evolution and Ethics," *Collected Essays*; 9 vols. (New York, 1914), IX, 80.



accumulating variations that do not arise; but that, according to the views supported in this volume, all that is highest and most beautiful in the soul, as well as in the body, could be, and has been, developed from beings lower than man, I do not greatly doubt.<sup>8</sup>

Through all of Butler's scientific books there is the contention that moral laws are not dependent on a so-called "higher-nature," that there is a moral government among the lowest forms of life:

As we are extending reason to the lower animals, so we must extend a system of moral government by rewards and punishments no less surely; and if we admit that to some considerable extent man is man, and master of his fate, we should admit also that all organic forms which are saved at all have been in proportionate degree masters of their fate too, and have worked out, not only their own salvation, but their salvation according, in no small measure, to their own good will and pleasure, at times with a light heart, and at times in fear and trembling.<sup>9</sup>

After the full development of his own theory of evolution in *Life and Habit*, Butler's conception of the role of the unconscious became central in his biological approach to morals. Butler's unconscious, as we have seen, was not the powerful and maleficent force of the modern psychoanalyst, but the highest development of the whole evolutionary process. For an action only passes into the unconscious when it has been thoroughly mastered; consciousness, or the constant struggle to resolve problems by intellectual effort, indicates, on the other hand, an insufficiency of knowledge, a lack of experience. The professional moralists, then, the people who are always trying to uncover the laws of right action, are "immoral" by comparison with those who know so well as to be unconscious of the need for intellectual principles. "It is a pity," says Butler, "there should exist so general a confusion of thought upon this subject, for it may be asserted without fear of contradiction that there is hardly any form of immorality now rife, which produces more disastrous effects upon society in general, than the so-called science of those who know that they know too well to be able to know truly."<sup>1</sup> The type of Victorian mind that Butler found distasteful was the earnest, self-consciously intellectual moralizer. "Truly," he observes, "if there is one who cannot find himself in the same room with

<sup>8</sup> *Life and Habit*, p. 237.

<sup>9</sup> *Luck or Cunning?* p. 62.

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Habit*, pp. 30-31.

the Life and Letters of an earnest person without being made instantly unwell, the same is a just man and perfect in all his ways.”<sup>2</sup>

In contrast to the Victorian ideal, all of whose essential qualities are summed up in the one word “earnestness,” Butler proclaims his own ideal—the life founded on the virtues of grace, unconscious wisdom, and beauty. Characteristically, he adopts the Christian distinction between “law” and “grace” to express the distinction between the two ideals. Those who are acutely conscious of their knowledge, who strive to reduce life to first principles, are under the law; those in whom knowledge is so completely diffused as to be no longer aware of it live under grace. In a famous passage Butler defends with subtlety and eloquence the new content he has given to the Christian terminology:

And grace is best, for where grace is, love is not distant. Grace! The old Pagan ideal whose charm even unlovely Paul could not withstand, but, as the legend tells us, his soul fainted within him, his heart misgave him, and standing alone on the seashore at dusk, he “troubled deaf heaven with his bootless cries,” his thin voice pleading for grace after the flesh.

The waves came in one after another, the sea-gulls cried together after their kind, the wind rustled among the dried canes upon the sandbanks, and there came a voice from heaven saying, “Let My grace be sufficient for thee.” Whereon, failing of the thing itself, he stole the word and strove to crush its meaning to the measure of his own limitations. But the true grace, with her groves and high places, and troops of young men and maidens crowned with flowers, and singing of love and youth and wine—the true grace he drove out into the wilderness—high up, it may be, into Piora, and into such-like places. Happy they who harboured her in her ill report.<sup>3</sup>

Although Butler believed that all life aspires to the perfection of unconscious wisdom, he saw that, before such a goal could be reached, it was essential to live for some time “under the law.” Indeed, complete unconsciousness or complete virtue would mean death. The individual frequently finds himself confronted by new situations to which the unconscious wisdom of the past is incapable of responding. At such crises, we find it necessary to readjust ourselves, to change our direction, and that involves a temporary break with the past, and a dependence on conscious knowledge. Butler’s Nietzschean transvaluation of values demands that we temper vice with virtue. “Virtue is, as it were,

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 32–33.

the repose of sleep or death. Vice is the awakening to the knowledge of good and evil—without which there is no life worthy of the name."<sup>4</sup> Progress demands the occasional disturbance of the virtuous repose of unconsciousness in favor of the vice of conscious, intellectual revaluation. But too much consciousness, too violent a break with the assimilated knowledge of the past disrupts the whole evolutionary process. For this reason, the truly healthy, and hence the truly moral organism finds that the gospel of Laodicea provides the best guide to life:

Nothing is worth doing or well done which is not done fairly easily, and some little deficiency of effort is more pardonable than any very perceptible excess; for virtue has ever erred on the side of self-indulgence rather than of asceticism, and well-being has ever advanced through the pleasures rather than through austerity.<sup>5</sup>

## II

In *The Way of All Flesh* Butler used two main devices by which to dramatize his scientific and moral ideas. By presenting the history of four generations of an average, middle-class Victorian family, he attempted to prove that the evolutionary process, often inscrutably, sometimes even blindly, followed a course that was undeniably moral and righteous. The history of the Pontifex family would show in the long run that the evolutionary process was not blindly mechanical but that it nourished and rewarded the qualities of "beauty, design, steadfastness of purpose, intelligence and courage." Within this broad framework of the novel there is an even more important illustration of the nature of evolutionary development: the growth of the hero from a state of spiritual darkness to one of enlightenment.<sup>6</sup>

Although Butler never interrupts the course of his story to give elaborate analyses of his scientific ideas, the reader familiar with them recognizes that they underlie the account of the development of the Pontifex family. Those ideas are, to recall the main ones briefly, the identity of memory and heredity, the transmission of acquired characteristics, the essential unity of life and the absence of any complete break between the generations, and the conception of evolutionary growth as a gradual, conservative absorption of improvements that have developed, half by the conscious desire of the organism, half by lucky acci-

<sup>4</sup> *Note Books* (xii), p. 18.

<sup>5</sup> *Evolution, Old and New*, pp. 30-31.

<sup>6</sup> H. F. Jones, *Samuel Butler*, ii, 1: "In form the story is, like the Book of Job and the Odyssey, that of the good man passing through trials and coming out in the end."

dent. Sometimes the ideas become explicit in the comments of Butler's spokesman, Overton. Born in 1802, Overton was a small boy when Ernest's great-grandfather was an old man, he was a young man when Ernest's grandfather was in his prime, he grew up with Theobald, and he followed Ernest's career with interest and concern.

Ernest's career, then, is set against a background of three generations of Pontifexes. His great-grandfather is endowed with a number of virtues, which presumably contribute no little to whatever strength of character Ernest shows. Although old Pontifex has no claims to great distinction, he has the supreme Butlerian virtue of being an unconscious knower, who lives "under grace." Like Butler himself he is a versatile amateur artist; his drawings are "so unaffectedly painstaking that they might have passed for the work of some good early master" and he can play "not very well according to professional standards, but much better than could have been expected."<sup>7</sup> His wife, to whom many of the less amiable traits in the later generations of the Pontifex family may be traced, is a strong-willed and stubborn woman who has little trouble in gaining control over her easy-going husband. George Pontifex, Ernest's grandfather, outwardly the most successful of all the Pontifexes, is, in the light of the whole evolutionary development, a conspicuous failure. He is a self-made man with the sole virtue of being prosperous, but he has none of the unconscious wisdom of his father:

While yet a boy he was a thorough little man of the world, and did well rather upon a principle which he had tested by personal experiment, and recognized as principles than from those profounder convictions which in his father were so instinctive that he could give no account concerning them.<sup>8</sup>

Far from representing an advance over his father, he is an irregular, abnormal growth, not the culmination of a long line, but a sudden divergence, "a new animal, arising from the coming together of many elements." "It is well known," Overton as the spokesman of Butler's scientific ideas goes on to say, "that the reproduction of abnormal growths, whether animal or vegetable, is irregular and not to be depended upon, even when they are not absolutely sterile."<sup>9</sup> George Pontifex's sons, and especially Theobald, suffer from this sudden inter-

<sup>7</sup> *The Way of All Flesh* (xvii), pp. 1 ff.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

ruption to the normal evolutionary development Theobald receives little from heredity; he has neither the unconscious wisdom of his grandfather, nor the determined self-sufficiency of his father. Only once does Butler seem to suggest that Theobald has a redeeming moral quality; that is when Theobald determinedly resolves to have nothing more to do with his disgraced son Overton, who is throughout the novel the emancipated Butler ironically telling the story of his blundering and oppressed youth, is delighted by Theobald's decision. He reflects that "Theobald acted with a readier and acuter moral sense than I had given him credit for."<sup>1</sup> But, for the most part both of Ernest's parents are beyond redemption.

It would be no use their even entering their mother's wombs and being born again. They must not only be born again, but they must be born again each one of them of a new father and of a new mother and of a different line of ancestry for many generations before their minds could become supple enough to learn anew.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, in the person of Ernest the Pontifex family emerges, although slowly and painfully, from the darkness of the last two generations.

To what extent does this evolutionary movement possess, as Butler claimed it did, a "moral backbone"? Obviously he does not share the complacent nineteenth century belief in an inevitable progress from one generation to another, but he does hold that the trend of evolution is toward the production of higher types of life. Even the Pontifex family, which does not represent an average development, illustrates how what is interrupted in one generation, and completely lost in another, may be eventually recovered. In the race as a whole the trend upward is even more apparent. Thus Overton reflects upon the changes that have taken place among the congregation in Theobald's church:

Even now I can see the men in blue smock frocks reaching to their heels, and more than one old woman in a scarlet cloak, the row of stolid, dull, vacant plough boys, ungainly in build, uncomely in face, lifeless, apathetic, a race a good deal more like the pre Revolution French peasant as described by Carlyle than is pleasant to reflect upon—a race now supplanted by a smarter, comelier and more hopeful generation, which has discovered that it too has a right to as much happiness as it can get, and with clearer ideas about the best means of getting it.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 276

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 275

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 62-63

Although Butler's evolutionary process viewed as a whole commends itself to man's moral faith, it does, nevertheless, undermine a belief in the possibility of a strict personal morality by dwarfing the individual, and removing any real confidence in human responsibility. Butler himself argued against this interpretation. It is absurd, he contends, to say that we are not responsible for what we do because we are the helpless victims of an inexorable heredity, for we must remember that there is an organic oneness of personality subsisting between parents and offspring:

I grant that at first sight it seems very unjust, that the parents should have the fun and the children be punished for it, but young people should remember that for many years they were part and parcel of their parents and therefore had a good deal of the fun in the person of their parents. If they have forgotten the fun now, that is no more than people do who have a headache after having been tipsy overnight. The man with a headache does not pretend to be a different person from the man who got drunk, and claim that it is his self of the preceding night and not his self of this morning who should be punished; no more should offspring complain of the headache which it has earned when in the person of its parents, for the continuation of identity, though not so immediately apparent, is just as real in one case as in the other.<sup>4</sup>

In theory, then, Butler denied that the individual existed as a separate personality. But in practice he found it difficult to follow out in his teaching the logical consequences of his theory. Thus we have the paradox of the thinker who constantly emphasized the absolute identity between the generations but relentlessly preached the necessity for complete separation between parents and offspring. In the novel *Overton* comments ironically on Butler's scientific views: "Theorists may say what they like about a man's children being a continuation of his own identity, but it will generally be found that those who talk in this way have no children of their own. Practical family men know better."<sup>5</sup> No small part of Ernest's spiritual triumph is his resolution to separate himself completely from his parents together with the strength to carry out that decision. He finally reaches a position where he can say: "It seems to me . . . that the family is a survival of the principle which is more logically embodied in the compound animal—and the compound animal is a form of life which has been found incompatible with high development. I would do with the family among mankind

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.

what nature has done with the compound animal, and confine it to the lower and less progressive races." <sup>6</sup>

Does Butler's own unhappy family life account for the inconsistency between his theory and his actual teaching? Is he, in other words, formulating a general law on the basis of a private experience, even though that law flatly contradicts his philosophical convictions? To answer this question in the affirmative would be easy and not completely unjust, but it would ignore the possibility of finding a more charitable explanation for the apparent inconsistency. Butler believed sincerely in the value of family ties, in the necessity of recognizing our debt to those who had gone before. But he was not given to blind ancestor worship. Ernest was as justified in denying his parents, who were nothing more than "outward and visible old husks" of himself, as he would be in denying a stage in his own development that he had outgrown.

In the story of Ernest's spiritual growth, which is, of course, far more important than the rather summary account of the development of the Pontifex family, the main theme is the gradual reawakening of Ernest's unconscious self. By supplying him with a new conception of the moral life, his unconscious self enables him to break free from the stultifying system under which he has been reared. Ernest owes his salvation first of all, of course, to the initial endowments of heredity; but that endowment is not great enough to prevent him from committing serious blunders. Only because he has enough strength to recover from violent blows and enough foresight to turn chance developments to his own advantage does he emerge successfully from his ordeal. Ernest's career, then, is an illustration in terms of human character and action of the main principles of Butler's vitalistic theory of evolution. The unconscious self, drawing its strength from the accumulated wisdom of the past, may be temporarily checked, but given reasonably favourable surroundings it will emerge to remould life according to its perfect laws.

Ernest begins his career under heavy disadvantages: he is brought up in a home where a blighting puritanical morality and a conventional middle-class priggishness dominate his life. Moreover the education that he receives, especially at the great public school of Roughborough, is merely the Pontifex way of life writ large. All his conscious convictions reflect the teaching of home and school. "Never was there a little mortal more ready to accept without cavil whatever he was told by

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 102.

those who were in authority over him.”<sup>7</sup> As yet he is not even aware of the existence of his unconscious or true self, and is incapable of listening to the message which it is eager to deliver to him:

You are surrounded on every side by lies which would deceive even the elect, if the elect were not generally so uncommonly wide awake; the self of which you are conscious, your reasoning and reflecting self, will believe these lies and bid you act in accordance with them. This conscious self of yours, Ernest, is a prig begotten of prigs and trained in priggishness; I will not allow it to shape your actions, though it will doubtless shape your words for many a year to come. . . . Obey *me*, your true self, and things will go tolerably well with you, but only listen to that outward and visible husk of yours which is called your father, and I will rend you in pieces even unto the third and fourth generation as one who has hated God; for I, Ernest, am the God who made you.<sup>8</sup>

Although Ernest is not aware of this true self, he is incapable of stifling it altogether. His acts are usually profounder than his convictions, and tacitly deny what he has been taught to accept as the good and the true. At school he is “not at all vindictive, easily pleased, perfectly free with whatever little money he had, no greater lover of his school work than of the games, and generally more inclinable to moderate vice than to immoderate virtue”<sup>9</sup>—in short, not a doomed soul, but predestined to salvation. Although he duly recognizes that a liberal education involves a detailed knowledge of the Athenian constitution, in practice he insists upon substituting a thorough knowledge of music, gained with ease and pleasure, for a fragmentary knowledge of Latin and Greek, derived from an involuntary exposure to a few classical authors. Why Ernest has this power Butler explains by quoting directly from *Life and Habit*. Given his premise that memory and heredity are identical, the whole course of human life becomes nothing more than a process of forgetting. For the first few years of life we have a memory that is vital and able to meet any situation that arises; as we grow older that memory weakens, and proves incapable of adjusting itself to changed circumstances. “It is the young and fair, then, who are the truly old and truly experienced; it is they who alone have a trustworthy memory to guide them.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 128-9.

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Habit*, p. 243. The passage is quoted with some slight changes by Overton in *The Way of All Flesh*, p. 144.



As Ernest grows older he loses this instinctive desire to mould his life according to his unconscious convictions. At Cambridge he does triumph briefly over his upbringing by writing a mildly unconventional essay in which, after discussing the great Greek tragedies, he concludes that "with the exception perhaps of some of the Psalms of David I know no writings which seem so little to deserve their reputation."<sup>2</sup> The essay wins him some literary reputation among his fellow students, but he is incapable of following up his success. Instead of waiting until he is driven by an inner necessity to express himself, he frantically pursues a subject that seems to command the popular ear. Toward the last of his stay at Cambridge, he has so far lost touch with his real self as to subscribe temporarily to the teachings of an Evangelical sect, known as the Simeonites. Overton's description of the Simeonites carries with it some of the moral horror that the Erewhonians had for poverty and disease. "They were a gloomy, seedy-looking *confrérie*, who had as little to glory in in clothes and manners as in the flesh itself."<sup>3</sup> The life at Cambridge, then, pleasant enough by contrast with the tortured existence at Roughborough, fashions another link in the chain that holds Ernest in spiritual bondage.

After graduating from Cambridge, he accepts without question the wishes of his parents, and prepares to enter the church. But the clergyman's profession involves a sudden, complete break with what is fundamental in his life, and too sudden a change, according to Butler's theory of evolutionary development, always brings disaster. "The most charitable excuse that I can make for the vagaries which it will now be my duty to chronicle," writes Overton, "is that the shock of change consequent upon his becoming suddenly religious, being ordained and leaving Cambridge, had been too much for my hero, and had for the time thrown him out of an equilibrium which was yet little supported by experience, and therefore as a matter of course unstable."<sup>4</sup> In this thoroughly disorganized state Ernest becomes an easy prey to the suavely reasoned arguments of his fellow curate, the high-churchman Pryer, and agrees to invest most of his money in a fantastic scheme for a school of spiritual pathology.<sup>5</sup> He is consumed by a desire to regen-

<sup>2</sup> *The Way of All Flesh*, p. 202.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 206.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 229.

<sup>5</sup> Butler's attitude toward Pryer is a little puzzling. In some respects Pryer is a good Erewhonian who believes that "no practice is entirely vicious which has not been extinguished among the comeliest, most vigorous and most cultivated races of mankind" (*ibid.*, p. 235). The school of spiritual pathology is a logical outcome of the Erewhonian

erate the church and society, and suffers remorse because his effort seems to be restricted to giving occasional half-crowns to his poor parishioners.

But Ernest never succeeds completely in stifling his genuine convictions. The life he leads is at best but a shaky compromise that needs very little to be disturbed. Although he himself is incapable of recognizing what in life gives him genuine satisfaction, an "external touch" will suddenly summon into existence a whole train of ideas that he recognizes immediately as valid. Butler thus explains the part that the "external touch" plays in the process of self-realization:

I suppose people almost always want something external to themselves, to reveal to them their own likes and dislikes. Our most assured likings have for the most part been arrived at neither by introspection nor by any process of conscious reasoning, but by the bounding forth of the heart to welcome the gospel proclaimed to it by another. We hear some say that such and such a thing is thus or thus, and in a moment the train thus has been laid within us, but whose presence we know not, flashes into consciousness and perception.<sup>6</sup>

Thus a chance meeting with Towneley, the easy-mannered, gracious idol of his college days, provides the "external touch" by which he is led to recognize the absurdity of his belief in the essential goodness of poverty. The idea that the poor by virtue of their very poverty developed virtues not to be found among the more prosperous members of society was one of those "bad threepenny pieces which had been passed off upon him" by his clerical associates. When Ernest, in a moment of combative self-justification, asks Towneley if he, too, is not fond of poor people, Towneley replies forcefully in the negative. "It was all over with Ernest from that moment. . . . As though scales had fallen suddenly from his eyes he saw that no one was nicer for being poor, and that between the upper and lower classes there was a gulf which amounted practically to an unpassable barrier."<sup>7</sup>

Towneley's simple "no," by undermining one of the main assumptions upon which Ernest's life as a London curate has been based, inaugurates a period of doubt and searching self-analysis. Towneley is the model of what Ernest unconsciously believes to be the perfect man: handsome, unaffected, amiable, and gracious. Men like Pryer, on the

attitude toward crime and disease. Pryer has also a delight in the wicked *bon mot* of which, we may be sure, Butler heartily approved.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 280.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 253.

other hand, are egotistical, opinionated, and attractive neither in looks nor in actions. Although this revelation marks the first definite step in Ernest's spiritual regeneration, its immediate effects are unfortunate. Ernest is still too much the product of Battersby, of Roughborough, of Cambridge, and of his recent life in London to act with wisdom, and, above all, with discretion. He becomes involved in his "worst scrape" because he sins neither wisely nor too well.

Ernest's imprisonment, on the face of it a disastrous interruption in his spiritual development, is in reality a salutary shock that restores much of his original strength of character. Indeed, without such a shock it is doubtful whether he would ever have had the strength to throw off the baneful influence of his parents and of his associates in Cambridge and in London. "He had been observing, reflecting, and assimilating all these months with no more consciousness of mental growth than a school-boy has of growth of body, but should he have been able to admit his growth to himself, and to act up to his increased strength if he had remained in constant close conviction with people who assured him solemnly that he was under a hallucination? The combination against him was greater than his unaided strength could have broken through, and he felt doubtful how far any shock less severe than the one from which he was suffering would have sufficed to free him."<sup>8</sup>

The burden of his past self fallen from his shoulders, Ernest has a new sense of his own significance, a confidence in his power to do something that nobody else can do. Now it becomes apparent to him that an intelligent principle, what Shaw would call the "life force," has been working obscurely but persistently in his life. Even his work as a curate, mistaken in its purpose and negligible in its results, is not without value in his development. For, on his release from prison, he finds that his familiarity with the poor districts in London makes it possible for him to begin his life anew in humble circumstances without suffering too acutely from the unattractiveness of his surroundings. His belief in the supernatural elements of Christianity destroyed, he can now have faith in "something as yet but darkly known, which made right right and wrong wrong."<sup>9</sup>

His regeneration is not yet complete, however. A few remnants of the old morality still remain, and need to be exorcised. By marrying Ellen, a former servant in the Pontifex household, who had been dismissed

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 280.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 298.

for misconduct, Ernest feels that he is completely repudiating the old life. But, later on, his unconscious self reveals to him the real grounds of his action:

In marrying Ellen he had meant to avoid a life of sin, and to take the course he believed to be moral and right. With his antecedents and surroundings it was the most natural thing in the world for him to have done, yet in what a frightful position had not his morality landed him. Could any amount of immorality have placed him in a much worse one? What was morality worth if it was not that which on the whole brought a man peace at the last, and could anyone have reasonable certainty that marriage would do this? It seemed to him that in his attempt to be moral he had been following a devil which had disguised itself as an angel of light.<sup>1</sup>

But Ellen's growing dissatisfaction with her new respectability, and the timely revelation that she was already married when she met him, releases Ernest from the bondage of his imprudent union. With a fortune left to him by his aunt, he retires to live the ideal Butlerian life—one where a calm, passionless bachelorhood, and an ample income enable him to pursue a literary career of genteel unorthodoxy.

Ernest can never hope to reach the perfection of a man like Towneley. Towneley has been born free; Ernest has obtained his freedom only after long years of laborious and painful experience. Whereas the Towneleys immediately recognize what gives them pleasure without the need of conscious analysis, people like Ernest must struggle consciously toward a goal that they never quite reach. "I see it all now," says Ernest. "The people like Towneley are the only ones who know anything that is worth knowing, and like that of course I can never be. But to make Towneleys possible there must be hewers of wood and drawers of water—men in fact through whom conscious knowledge must pass before it can reach those who can apply it gracefully and instinctively as the Towneleys can."<sup>2</sup>

If Butler meant that *The Way of All Flesh* should be more a fresh reading of life than "a clearing away of English Victorian rubbish," why have the majority of its readers failed to recognize and give proper emphasis to the author's intention and actual achievement? The answer to this question need not involve the indictment, on the ground of critical obtuseness, of a whole generation of readers. For neither the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 335.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 328.

philosophy of life nor the artistic embodiment that philosophy received is a satisfying achievement.

Butler himself, who usually had a confidence in the excellence of his own books that reviewers found it difficult to share, was never enthusiastic about *The Way of All Flesh*. When he had brought the book to its conclusion he wrote to Miss Savage: "By the way, I think you think I like my novel better than I do. I am more doubtful about it in reality than about any book that I have ever done. I never wrote a book yet about which I felt so uncertain whether it was good or not. I have no doubt about *The Fair Haven*, *Life and Habit*, and *Alps and Sanctuaries* being good, but this may for aught I feel clearly about it be very good or very bad."<sup>3</sup> It is important to remember that *The Way of All Flesh* was, in a very real sense, never finished. So closely was the novel connected with Miss Savage that after her death in 1885 Butler could never bring himself to return to it.<sup>4</sup> Accordingly the last part of the book that begins with Ernest's release from prison and describes his gradual moral regeneration never received the careful reworking that Butler felt was necessary before he could entertain the thought of publication.

*The Way of All Flesh*, it must be admitted, fails to embody Butler's ideas convincingly. Although Towneley was meant to represent the completely perfect, because unconscious knower, the supreme product of the evolutionary process, he is, at best, Butler's idea of the "swell" who sins gracefully, at worst "a coarse creature with vicious propensities."<sup>5</sup> Ernest, intended as a pathetic contrast to Towneley,<sup>6</sup> is nevertheless the hero of the story, and the object of the reader's sympathy and admiration.<sup>7</sup> It is not difficult to understand why Towneley fails to play the exalted role in the novel that Butler had assigned to him. Butler's idea of the superman as the completely unconscious knower

<sup>3</sup> *Letters*, p. 293 (July 19, 1883).

<sup>4</sup> See H. F. Jones, *Samuel Butler*, ii, 1.

<sup>5</sup> *Letters*, p. 301 (Miss Savage to Butler, November 17, 1883).

<sup>6</sup> H. F. Jones, *Samuel Butler*, ii, 8: "Towneley is intended as a contrast to Ernest. He crowded into Towneley all the good things he had observed in those of his friends whom he most admired. There had been nothing wrong in Towneley's bringing up. With a great price Ernest obtained his freedom, but Towneley was born free."

<sup>7</sup> Some qualifications must be made for the wealthy Ernest of the last few chapters. His life is not very far from being an escape from one form of respectability and priggishness into another. To Miss Savage's criticism that Ernest "gets *tant soit peu* priggish—in fact very much so towards the end" (*Letters*, p. 302, November 17, 1883), Butler could only make the lame reply: "I have no doubt Ernest becomes priggish—for as I have told you I am very priggish myself—everyone is more or less." (*Letters*, p. 303, November 17, 1883).

could not receive expression in heroic terms. Contrast Towneley with the intellectual mystics in the last play of Shaw's *Back to Methuselah*, Towneley's Shavian counterpart, a contrast all the more telling since in his theory of evolution Shaw is an acknowledged disciple of Butler, and it becomes apparent how restricted and relatively crude was Butler's vision.<sup>8</sup> Even Butler himself implicitly admitted in the concluding sections of the novel that the qualities for which Towneley stood had little relevance to the vital issues of life. "There is no real solidarity between us," says Ernest in explaining to Overton why he has decided to sever all relations with Towneley. "I should be in perpetual fear of losing his good opinion if I said things he did not like, and I mean to say a great many things . . . which Towneley will not like."<sup>9</sup> The Ernest who makes this speech, no longer a blundering and credulous youth but a self-confident critic of established institutions and a moral pioneer, is substantially Butler's attempt at self-portraiture; in Ernest's words we sense some of the contempt that Butler, in spite of his theoretical convictions, could not help showing toward the individual whose life, guided by instinctive responses, was merely a model of gracious conformity.

Yet, granting that *The Way of All Flesh*, considered as an attempt to dramatize a philosophy of life, suffers from a number of serious flaws, still we misread the novel if we regard it solely as a masterpiece of long-drawn-out matricide and parricide, and as Butler's most powerful illustration of his satirical genius. Even if we find it impossible to take Butler's ideas seriously, some familiarity with them is essential for an appreciation of the artistic unity of the novel. Ignore them, and the novel becomes a series of individual scenes, each done with skill and power, but together making up no unified whole. And, if we are disposed to examine the ideas with care, we shall discover that those developed in *The Way of All Flesh*—the conception of personality, the theory of the unconscious, the emphasis on life as a manifestation of shaping will, the biological approach to problems of human conduct—have passed into the main current of modern thought.

<sup>8</sup> C. E. M. Joad in his *Samuel Butler* (London, Leonard Parsons, 1924) explains how Shaw's development of Butler's theory of the unconscious underlies this contrast. Whereas Butler made the perfectly unconscious knower the goal of evolution, Shaw argued that the gradual assignment of our habits to the realm of the unconscious released men for a life of increasing intellectual consciousness. See Joad, pp. 41 ff., 165 ff.

<sup>9</sup> *The Way of All Flesh*, p. 361.